

ASSEMBLING NEARNESS, CONSTRUCTING PROXIMITIES:  
TOWARD A THEOPOETICS OF  
SPATIAL JUSTICE AND ARCHITECTURE

—

A POLITICAL THEOLOGY OF CARE AND CONFINEMENT,  
HOW THEOLOGY AND ARCHITECTURE CO-CONSTRUCT

“THE”

HOMELESS, VAGRANT, VAGABOND, HOBO, BEGGAR, PAUPER, TRAMP, CRIPPLE,  
WANDERER, PANHANDLER, DESERVING POOR, WORKING POOR, UNDESERVING POOR, IDLER,  
INDIGENT, DRUNKEN, FEEBLE-MINDED, WORKINGMAN, SELF-SUFFICIENT, DEPENDENT, MALINGERER,  
PETTY CRIMINAL, PRISONER, INSANE, CONTAGION, PROFLIGATE...

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Advisor: Dr. Catherine Keller

R. Kyle Warren

Drew University

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## ABSTRACT

### TOWARD A THEOPOETICS OF SPATIAL JUSTICE AND ARCHITECTURE

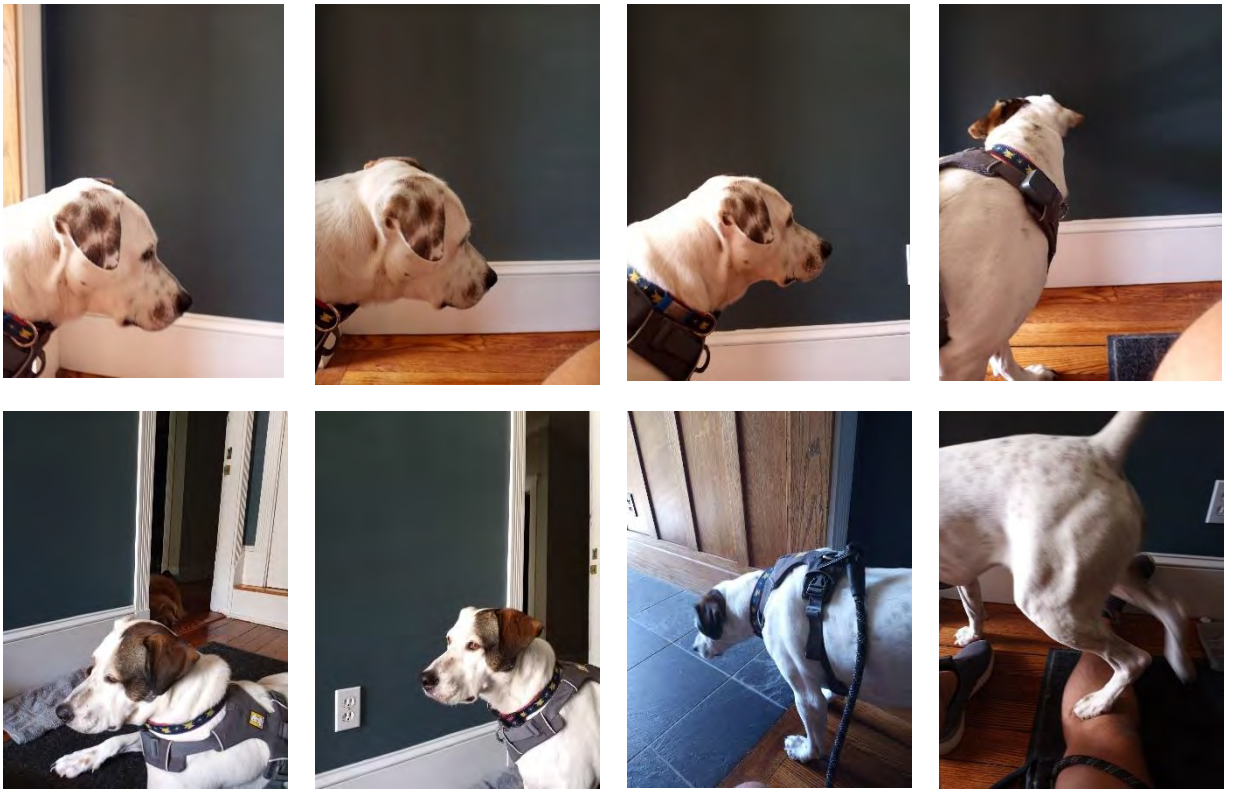
R. Kyle Warren

This dissertation proposes a theopoetic framework for spatial justice in architecture, examining the interplay between Eurocentric ontological structures and material configurations perpetuating marginalizing socio-spatial hierarchies. Utilizing theopoetics as a hermeneutic tool, it analyzes relational dynamics within built environments, contrasting the experiences of those "without a home" with those "at home." The study scrutinizes how neoliberal policies, material configurations, and historical religious values have influenced social interactions and conceptualizations of relational spaces. It emphasizes the experiences of "the homeless" against the backdrop of whiteness ideologies, particularly within Boston's social services contexts, critiquing the enduring dehumanization in housing systems rooted in colonial and Puritan legacies. Advocating for a theological and ethical confrontation of these systems, the research proposes architectural interventions to enact theopoetic spatial justice. By reconceptualizing architectural practices, it argues for extending theological inquiry beyond sacred spaces to address socio-spatial injustices in design, planning, and development. This entails examining architecture's impact on neighbor relations, inclusion/exclusion dynamics, and capacities for shaping communal living within structures of care and confinement. Interrogating political narratives on housing insecurity and homelessness in Boston through case studies and interludes, the dissertation aims to challenge discursive and biopolitical frameworks that overlay the design, construction, and governance of shelters, public spaces, and the stigmatization of marginalized populations tied to property. It seeks to operationalize socio-spatial justice by contesting prevalent spatial

inequalities and proposes a critical constructivist approach to liberal-progressive ideologies complicit with security measures, advocating for a theopoetics of spatial justice to reimagine alternative spatial futures.

## DEDICATION

To the canines who journey with me through changing spaces, atmospheres, and architectures  
that lurk, leap, and lure, causing us to  
turn, twist, and tense in polyrhythmic flow,  
synchronized through vibrations of timbre, texture, and tone, in (un)metrical time,  
in ways that are differently sensed, yet shared, through lowering the frequencies of human  
language and  
oriented by scents, sounds, and surprising micro-seismic waves,  
that encourage curiosity, creativity, and courage together.



*Image My pal and keeper, Wyatt, a sensory savant, exploring subtle non-designed architectural boundaries.*

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*Figure 2 A Visual Contents of the Interludes.*

\*In this dissertation I use footnotes for citation references and endnotes for explanatory content notes. The commentary notes can be found in the back matter.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you.



*Figure 3 "Connection Beyond Structure," R. Kyle Warren*



## PREFACE

### GROUNDED IN THE POLITICS OF HOMELESSNESS

The ultimate aim of the present book is to shift academic attention from “the homeless” toward the apparatuses that produce and distribute housing insecurity and deprivation. Thus, this is a book about the constitution of homelessness as a problem to be managed.

—Craig Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*<sup>1</sup>

Naming “homelessness” as the ground for “a theopoetics of architecture” risks mis-framing the dissertation. This project is not *about* “homelessness” or *on* “sacred architecture.” Rather, the dissertation is concerned with the conditions of possibility for encounters and the material forces that shape proximity and distance - relational/spatial terms that describe the orientation and participation of different scales of living together among and within assemblies of materiality and immaterial forces. Architectural systems of assembly accompany the encounter; interpreted in this way, the concept of sacredness is not limited to specific types of buildings collectively identified as religious buildings, spiritual places, or sites of memory. Instead, it allows for the joint expansion of religious and architectural disciplinary interactions. It interrogates the sacredness of ontological relationality, the holiness of the neighbor-event, the experiences of the divine felt in spaces of respite or revelation, and the entangled sacred-secular processes of material and

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<sup>1</sup> Craig Willse, *The Value of Homelessness, Managing Surplus Life in the United States* (Minnesota University Press, 2015), 22.

\*In this dissertation I use footnotes for citation references and endnotes for explanatory content notes. The commentary notes can be found in the back matter.

social assemblies that impact shared experiences of precarity. Overall, it adopts a broad view of 'sacredness' as pertaining not just to selective building types but also to the ethical dimensions of living together amid assemblages of material and immaterial forces across various scales.

Each year, researchers publish numerous studies on homelessness across a wide range of fields, such as economic policy, political science, public health, and social work, which attempt to define, count, and assess the population labeled “the homeless,” or the less stigmatizing “people experiencing homelessness.” A deconstruction of homelessness as a concept, a figure, and an experience rarely accompanies them. Often, writers either uncritically name homelessness as a generalizable position, or we rely on definitions and data from other fields and import the accompanying assumptions and conclusions.

While pursuing my doctorate, I also worked with young individuals facing homelessness. This work was not initially meant to intersect with my academic pursuits, yet, over time, it inspired a growing conviction of the need for more profound interpretations, or hermeneutics, of homelessness. My daily interactions did not just inspire me—they underscored the importance of weaving these real-life experiences into my research. The academic framework provided by Craig Willse’s book, *The Value of Homelessness: Managing Surplus Life in the United States*, further encouraged me to make a meaningful connection between the varied environments I navigated and my research.<sup>2</sup> Willse had similar experiences working in social services, and many of his observations corroborate my experiences, from spatial and staff power dynamics to white privilege at multiple stages of client engagement. His Foucauldian–Marxist critiques of

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<sup>2</sup> Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 2015.

neoliberalism kept the political questions and implications at the forefront of conceptualizing homelessness and housing. *The Value of Homelessness* presents an academic model for combining theory and practice into, on the one hand, a critique of the discourses *on* homelessness, and on the other, an elevation of people's lived experiences without sensationalizing their stories. While he acknowledges the challenges of integrating theory with the dynamics of everyday experiences, Willse affirms a notable problem: homelessness often does not garner the attention it deserves as a subject worthy of doctoral research. Despite this, I was hopeful that Willse's methodology would align with my theoretical constructs, especially considering my previous interaction with his work on biopolitics that he co-edited with the sociologist and affect theorist Patricia Ticineto Clough.<sup>3</sup>

Like Willse, I had a lot of questions about the spaces I was working in during my time at Bridge Over Troubled Waters (BOTW). I split my day between working within programs inside the six-story building, traversing Boston on foot to connect with clients, and staffing BOTW's 25-foot medical/outreach van parked on either the Boston Common or Harvard Square. Navigating multiple spaces required nimble adjustments based on the interplay between the ordering of the materials in the environment and the ordering of client-staff interactions. Willse reflects on "caseworkers, program managers, and staff therapists" working on "the other side of a locked door, the 'office' side."<sup>4</sup> Willse acknowledged the unmistakable influence of white privilege on hiring practices, work

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<sup>3</sup> Craig Willse and Patricia Ticineto Clough, eds. *Beyond Biopolitics: Essays on the Governance of Life and Death* (Duke University Press, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 5.

promotions, program assignments, and unequal distribution of emotional labor. Like Willse's observation of the lack of people of color in "office side positions," I observed that the overwhelming number of people holding Master of Social Work (MSW) degrees, the preferred degree for director and management positions, were white. The professional degree bias is not an anomaly; the majority of people graduating with degrees in social work are disproportionately white.<sup>5</sup> My own experiences at BOTW affirm how power systems and ideologies of whiteness operate spatially and structurally simultaneously.

## BOSTON CONTEXT

Every shelter or service provider operates within its own unique set of local dynamics of place-based politics. The individuals engaging with Bridge Over Troubled Waters programs face distinct challenges inherent to the organization's specific location. The building's address does not tell the story of the complex network of forces that the youth and young adults must navigate as they approach the organization's urban footprint. Precarity, shaped by their material surroundings, intensifies insecurity and toxic stress. Movement and circulation associated with housing insecurity expose individuals to

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<sup>5</sup> "MSW Graduates by Race and Ethnicity: Findings from the 2018 Survey of Masters of Social Work Graduates," *George Washington University Health Workforce Institute*. September 2019., 4-7. [https://www.cswe.org/getmedia/938fe746-53c2-47ff-85d6-086df54821c4/WorkforceStudy\\_Brief-MSW\\_Raceethnicity-pdf.pdf](https://www.cswe.org/getmedia/938fe746-53c2-47ff-85d6-086df54821c4/WorkforceStudy_Brief-MSW_Raceethnicity-pdf.pdf).

Also see, Melody Loya, "Racial Attitudes in White Social Workers: Implications for Culturally Sensitive Practice," *PB&J: Politics, Bureaucracy, and Justice* vol. 3 no. 1.

networks of surveillance and control dictated by the management of places, such as parks, and access to buildings, including shelters, businesses, and municipal facilities.<sup>6</sup>

The diverse group of youth and young adults served by Bridge pass through daily fields of surveillance, bodily risk, and toxic stress due to housing insecurity. They carry the marks and memories of dehumanization and yet resist being defined by them. The events I reference are not intended to be representative of experiences of homelessness. Neither do they speak for others. While some of my claims may apply to broader contexts, I focus on limited sites and encounters from which to generate questions. When referencing “experiences of homelessness,” I am referencing instances grounded in specific times and places. The most relevant encompass multiple scales and types of architecture and environment:

1. My time working across several programs’ associated architectures and locations under the institutional gaze of a single non-profit organization (BOTW). The programmatic spaces included:

- a. an emergency night shelter program called the “Welcome Center,” formally the “Warming Center,”
- b. a short-term temporary residence program called “Emergency Residence” staffed by social workers,
- c. Operating a medical/outreach van parked on Boston Common or Harvard Square and

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<sup>6</sup> The social service provider network in Boston, MA involves hundreds of agencies and organizations. For example, when I say “shelters,” the shelter is not a stand-alone entity. It is one of many points of contact. See Preface Appendix.

- d. traversing Boston's neighborhoods to meet those who might benefit from emergency resources or social service provisions.
2. The events surrounding the politicization of an area that came to be identified as Mass and Cass, a location familiar to our outreach and medical team at BOTW. Some of the significant buildings/programs include
- a. the city-run shelter "112 Southampton,"
  - b. a temporary structure named the "Engagement Center,"
  - c. the Suffolk County House of Corrections,
  - d. Boston Medical Center – originally the site of Boston City Hospital (1864 - 1996),
  - e. and the infrastructure and facilities associated with Long Island shelters and programs.

*Melnea Cass Blvd. and Massachusetts Ave. (Mass and Cass)*

The area does not exist as a codified jurisdiction, nor was it mapped as a territory. Yet, it is a place that has acquired meaning through narratives and codified policies. "Mass and Cass" represents more than the literal intersection it names. It exists as a representation, a figuration of social and political tensions more than a location. Each intersection in Boston does not stand for a "spatial problem." Yet, the location of a concentration of particular bodies becomes coded and constructed into an object/location of contestation.

The events that participated in the heightened profile of the area include periodic sweeps by Boston Police and Massachusetts State Troopers, in conjunction with Boston Public Works, service provision by multiple non-profits along with Public Health

officials, and the intervention of planning and architectural professionals to build new infrastructure, to remodel existing buildings, or to recommend future construction and development projects for the city to instigate.

Dehumanizing and re-traumatizing processes –surveillance, criminalization, denied subjecthood, exclusion, stigmatization, infantilization,<sup>7</sup> and adultification<sup>8</sup>—capture the experiences of “homelessness” that BOTW aims to address and remedy. However, as key to my dissertation research, dehumanizing processes can also occur through BOTW's own services due to dynamics embedded within the complex interplay between care, safety, and healing. Well-intentioned services may unintentionally increase dysregulation and re-trigger clients' PTSD. The production of space and the construction of built infrastructures, including shelters and concentrations of health agencies, may indeed be genuinely motivated by personal and institutional intentions to serve and humanize and yet produce adverse effects and outcomes. Designing built environments and programming with the best of intentions does not preclude increasing feelings of toxicity or incidents of re-traumatization for those in vulnerable situations. This dissertation seeks to examine how even compassionate services - through the material realities of their implementation - can end up reproducing experiences of

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<sup>7</sup> Flynn, R. J. 2021. Infantilization in care, community and cognitive disability. MRes Thesis, University College Cork. <https://hdl.handle.net/10468/12426>

<sup>8</sup> Adultification is the bias of perceiving children or young people as more mature, more capable of work, due to more severe punishment, and more sexually active than they actually are. Its negative effects impact Black children, girls more than boys, and Anissa Durham argues it is a form of anti-Black racism rooted in chattel slavery in America. “What You Should Know About Adultification Bias,” USC Annenberg Center for Health Journalism, March 2023. <https://centerforhealthjournalism.org/our-work/reporting/what-you-should-know-about-adultification-bias#:~:text=Adultification%20bias%20is%20a%20stereotype,means%20of%20gaining%20an%20education>

dehumanization, regardless of personal or institutional good intentions to alleviate suffering.



*Figure 4(Upper Left) The Boston Common Development, Van Outreach & Surveillance location. (Upper Right) Tremont & BOTW at 47 West St. Circulation. (Lower Left) West St. Movements & Alcoves. (Lower Right) Public-Private Sidewalks and Business Adjacent Warming Zones.*



*Figure 5 An Example Outreach & Medical Van Interior*





Figure 6 A Schematic of BOTW West St. Building with 6 Floors and 13 Programs.



Figure 7 West St. ecologies. Pictures show the transformation of a parking lot squeezed between buildings (left) becoming a temporary bookstore (right). Objects and walls shape the space but would traditionally be “outside” architecture.

### Trauma and Materiality

People experiencing housing insecurity face diverse spatial and institutional harms, making it difficult to fully articulate the extent of their dehumanization. This research project explores the links between the built environment and social justice, aiming to reframe “the problem of homelessness” through a transdisciplinary approach. I use hermeneutic lenses to describe the body/building<sup>9</sup> relationship by using the concepts of affect theory, trauma studies, and architecture theory. Thresholds between disciplines, institutions, and professions mirror those found within their associated buildings—between rooms, structures, and internal divisions. By exploring intersections across

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<sup>9</sup> I am referencing Elizabeth Grosz’s interpretation of the blurred body-building boundary relationship, see Grosz, Elizabeth, “Bodies-Cities” in *Sexuality and Space*, Colomina, Beatriz, and Jennifer Bloomer, eds. (New York, N.Y.: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992).

disciplines, institutions, and professions, this research reveals how boundaries between these various organizational structures parallel the inherent complexities found within the buildings and spaces they occupy. Analyzing these parallels sheds light on the potential ways in which intentions to establish truly safe spaces, such as sanctuaries or shelters, may be subverted. I show how the intent to provide a safe place - be it a sanctuary or a shelter - may be undermined by privilege-power relationships, subjectivities of difference, and the multiple bodily adaptations engendered by previous experiences.

The built environment exerts uniquely discernible impacts on those who have experienced trauma. The body that has known trauma engages with its environment in a multitude of divergent manners. Bodies adapt, protect, and regenerate in myriad ways, each distinctly shaped by vestiges of intense distress and acts of violence. Affect theory and trauma studies inform my approach to deconstructing conventional boundaries of the individual body. Atomistic constructions of subjectivity locate trauma within an individual survivor. I attempt to release the individual from sole proprietorship of swarming intensities.<sup>10</sup> When trauma is conceived as existing at the interstice between socio historical phenomena and the visceral imprints of interpersonal harm, what new understandings of trauma's influence might emerge?

Trauma grounds the questions that guide the chapters, but this project does not focus on uncovering a person's personal trauma, asking people to retell their stories, or providing the reader with answers and reasons for homelessness issues. It asks why homelessness is still approached in overgeneralized and representational ways. Why are

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<sup>10</sup> I am thinking with Deleuze and Guattari's Antonin Artaud-inspired notion of a "body without organs" and R. D. Laing's anti-psychiatry writings.

statistics reintroduced with regularity as an introductory frame as if the statistics reflect profoundly new processes or should be a measurable guide to policy and philanthropy? Why do complex somatic and social complexes get messily combined under the banner of homelessness?

While trauma theory remains predominantly linguistic, I am interested in the materiality of trauma, the objects, and the places co-present at moments of collective and personal trauma, material (re)constructions, and its subsequent (re)arrangement of spatial relationships.<sup>11</sup> Examining the materiality of trauma, including the objects and places present during moments of collective and personal trauma, as well as their subsequent (re)arrangement of spatial relationships, illuminates how the built environment interacts with individuals who have experienced trauma. This focus on space and materiality expands beyond traditional notions of trauma centered within the individual victim or survivor, acknowledging the complex and distinctive ways in which the post-traumatic body engages with its surrounding ecologies.

The built environment affects us all; but it does so in specific and distinct ways for those who have experienced trauma. The post-traumatic body interacts with surrounding ecologies in complex and even contradictory ways. The body adapts, resists, and protects in multiple ways that are unique to the experiences of extreme stress and violence. A focus on space and materiality intentionally seeks to move beyond (as further, not past) notions of the bounded body that center the effects of trauma within the individual victim or survivor.

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<sup>11</sup> Trauma implies responses to acts of violence and violation beyond the experience of the event itself. Characteristically, traumatic experiences resist linguistic capture. Memory and narrative are disrupted, fractured, and reorganized in nonlinear ways that elude speech and writing.

Material and spatial objects, as well as interpersonal dynamics, can trigger retraumatization. Nonhuman materiality is a part of the affective assemblage of somatic structuring. Memory, neurophysiology, and sensations are conduits for translation with or without integration. Responses to trauma do not remain in the past; they re-form in the present and are exacerbated by violations—often unintended, often sheerly structural—that ignore the affective resonances of other objects and bodies.

### Homelessness, Complex Trauma, and the Built Environment

Clinicians, counselors, and social workers study the psychological definitions of trauma, while the humanities are generally attuned to collective, cultural, or generational trauma. A clashing of these multivalent intrusions—at the individual and the social level—often characterizes experiences of homelessness. Institutional spaces impact the ways in which people experience homelessness.<sup>12</sup> When I witness confrontations between “client” and “care provider” or the frustration that a person expresses about the interactions they have with staff or the rules and regulations they are subject to, and in the worst scenarios, are violated by the staff, I wonder how repeated institutional retraumatization shapes a person’s motivation to remain in the world.<sup>13</sup> The establishment of trust is foundational to the process of recovering from trauma. According to trauma theorist Judith Herman, “Establishing safety begins by focusing on control of the body and gradually moves

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<sup>12</sup> Therefore, I map the jurisdictions of control and care to point to moments of both conflict and coordination that play out on the surface of bodies.

<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the most concentrated example of architectural space and re-traumatization exists in carceral and confinement settings.

outward toward control of the environment.”<sup>14</sup> The spaces I focus on in my dissertation, such as NGOs, faith-based outreach programs, and publicly managed shelters and recovery programs, limit the control over one’s environment. Forms of privilege and power circulate placing the formation of trust at constant risk.

For individuals who have endured a deep breach of trust and the traumatic violation of personal boundaries, experiencing further harm or neglect in places intended to offer safety, care and support can be profoundly damaging. Not only does it recreate feelings of violation, but it also undermines the very possibility of spaces offering respite from violence and opportunities for healing—whether physical, emotional or spiritual. The built environment collects experience across time and space.<sup>15</sup> The ecology of materials can establish the experience of simultaneous punctures and ruptures.<sup>16</sup> Built environment stands for the space of constructed infrastructures of movement and inhabitable objects. Space incorporates architecture’s material assemblies and processes.<sup>17</sup> Spatialized questions are not transcendent, empty, or vacuous. Therefore, the language of living without a home, being home-less, or living outside of architecture hides worlds of meaning and obscures analysis and critique. Theoretically, *space* functions as a way to talk about simultaneity, which is the co-existence of realities at

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<sup>14</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence — From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992, 2015), 160.

<sup>15</sup> Spatiality and affect provide a way to analyze simultaneity, and theopoetics allows space for non-linearity.

<sup>16</sup> My approach to spatial questions in my dissertation is informed by critical geographers. Space is less specific than architecture, but it is not less material or more transcendent.

<sup>17</sup> Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, Verso, 1989), 2.

different scales of duration. The context of this dissertation covers the geography and history of the city of Boston. Still, I frame discussions at different scales of the built environment to highlight differences in force relations.

This dissertation granted me the opportunity to more deeply explore some of the religious and cultural histories that participate in some of the material constraints that are commonly experienced, at a higher degree than chance, by people experiencing homelessness - exclusion, displacement, and surveillance.

The experiences and material conditions of homelessness are not monolithic — in fact, a characterization of homelessness is its nonspecificity except in its most superficial, usually measurable, definitions (such as the categories established by HUD).<sup>18</sup> Therefore, homelessness is not synonymous with trauma, and trauma is not innate to experiences of homelessness. However, trauma ruptures world-making (a sort of anti-poiesis) and meaning for many people who experience and re-experience overwhelming physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual violence associated with claims to shelter, place, property, location, and presence. The claims and contestations have the potential to be disruptive of one's subjectivity, connection, and perspective on self and one's place in the world. The most relevant overlap for my dissertation lies in the elements of place, materiality, and the organization of space that connects homelessness and traumatic affects. My entry point into the politics of homelessness involves focused attention on the built environment, serving as a means to link the embodied affects of trauma with the surrounding material structures of order and control.

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<sup>18</sup> While the statistics used to measure the extent and effects of homelessness are informative, they represent slivers of information embedded in disciplinary epistemologies that should be critiqued.

Continuous experiences of trauma rupture one's constructions of "reality" and "truth." They have the power to alter a person's will to remain in the world. I am seeking language to cultivate and communicate new modes of becoming amid material constraints such as housing insecurity.

Because I am concerned about witnessing the ramifications of places of trust creating encounters of intrusion, toxicity, stress, triggering, deregulation, and re-traumatization, I use language about world-making, creative becoming, and natality — amid dehumanization and dismissal. The dissertation process granted the opportunity to craft an artifact that documents certain dehumanizing practices associated with systems of care, confinement, and housing. These practices often remain unrecognized,<sup>19</sup> devalued, or lack institutional power which privileges forms of communication, representation, and translation that align with the prevailing epistemologies and ontologies upholding a given order. My dissertation does not cover studies on homelessness. Still, the bodies, identities, and communities that experience or are experiencing housing insecurity, displacement, or threatening shelter motivate the chapters that follow, implicitly present if not explicitly. Willse turns to Ruth Wilson Gilmore to express the significance of the housing system's participation in systemic racism, which Gilmore defines as "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death."<sup>20</sup> Racism manifests

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<sup>19</sup> I am thinking about Gayatri Spivak's critique of the politics of recognition, see her talk "Gayatri Spivak: The Trajectory of the Subaltern in My Work" given at the University of California in 2008. <https://youtu.be/2ZHH4ALRFHw?si=kdmsuL9z58khd-k->

<sup>20</sup> Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 2. Willse quotes from Gilmore's *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2007), 28.

within the housing system through a range of practices, including housing denial, property seizures, withholding public investments, eviction laws, parcel zoning, biased insurance and predatory bank loan practices. These actions disproportionately affect people of color, leading to increased housing insecurity which can lead to temporary, intermittent, or chronic homelessness. While homelessness is influenced by multiple factors— it is not determined exclusively by racism—housing insecurity cannot be disentangled from the histories of anti-black racism, settler colonialism, immigrant discrimination, and white privilege in the U. S. Homelessness is a notoriously multifaceted phenomenon—or more accurately described as a network of intersecting phenomena—intricately linked to the most insidiously debilitating systems of discrimination toward “some populations” over others. “Housing,” Willes explains, “draws from already existing racial subordinations and entrenches and intensifies the death-making effects of those racisms, and so this ‘some populations’ is neither arbitrary nor accidental.”<sup>21</sup> Not coincidentally, homelessness demographics reflect the people and communities historically, perpetually, and insidiously targeted, harmed, and neglected in the United States. People most susceptible to housing insecurity and the destruction of their homes include LGBTQIA+ youth, trans people of color, Black men, health-impaired or compromised people, families experiencing poverty, people with disabilities, people with immigration or refugee status, racialized minorities, seniors, non-working people, veterans, or people living with substance use disorder.

My dissertation begins with reflections on homelessness and ends with discussing theopoetic futures. I am not following a triumphalist arc. The movement toward a

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<sup>21</sup> Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 2.



discussion of futures is not a departure from present concerns about housing deprivation, because futures concerns becoming, futures in the making. Futures is not meant to name an exclusive focus on “the future,” but refers to futures that are un-made, shortened, or thwarted because “housing insecurity and housing deprivation draw some futures close—shortened life spans, illness, suffering—and foreclose the likelihood of other possible figures.”<sup>22</sup> Theopoetic imaginations hold potential for infinite creativity in their becoming. Theopoetic futures do not adhere to a fixed logic of “planning” as captured by “the plan,” Here, the language is an attempt to embody futurity, not “the future” measured by chronos time. Rather, it envisions futurity as an unfolding process of creative becoming - fluid, uncontrolled, apophatic, yet life-affirming in its interrelational nature. This becoming is characterized by a perpetual dynamism that eludes containment, simultaneously organizing and exceeding individual entities as they incarnate within a world in flux. Significantly, predetermined visions of “the future” differ from theopoetic imaginings of becoming. The lexicons of design and planning imply that architectural forms are fixed and static representations, divorced from any notion of dynamic processes. Theopoetic futures of architecture shifts focus onto architecture's own emergent potentials through relations that exceed categorization. It draws us toward architectural becomings that participate in, rather than rigidly define, wider ecological transformations unfolding beyond any single discipline.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Kearney, “God making: an essay in theopoetic imagination,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Phenomenology*, (2017) 4:1, 31-44, <http://www.tandfonline.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1080/20539320.2017.1319625>. Also printed in *Art and Anatheism*, “God Making: Theopoetics and Anatheism,” edited by Richard Kearney and Matthew Clemente, 2018.

### Homelessness and Built Environment

From the position of homelessness, I explore the co-construction of bodies and the built environment at thresholds where the presence of histories, agendas, and stakes are entangled with power. The territories that bodies pass through are never experienced as the same, and in many cases, a person's felt sense of “the real” presence of these forces and phenomena is contested. It is a contested field that enfolds the material-immaterial matrix of non-neutral spaces and thresholds.<sup>24</sup> A moment of spatial-material contestation could be a doorway, a room, a building, or a designated zone in the city. At each scale, territories molded by built structures are crisscrossed by intensities, sensations, and effects of surveillance and management, which act unevenly on bodies. Architecture and spatial analysis are the entry points to investigate spaces and places that are both sites and agents in the materialization of events that have often reached the level of public awareness and engagement; public hearings, political debates, and visible protests shape and are shaped by these locations. If the ethics of living together and neighboring are to be more fully addressed, the more than human milieu in which encountering happens requires an interrogation of the construction, ordering, and navigation of place, infrastructure, and enclosures—walls, sidewalks, shelters, courtrooms, and hospitals are agents in the assemblages of spatial power relations that participate in the alchemy of conviviality—living together with difference.

### **CONSTRUCTIONS OF HOMELESSNESS**

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<sup>24</sup> I use the term threshold broadly to register the immaterial and material borders, barriers, and borderlands that are in perpetual flux.

The systemic nature of housing insecurity is masked by the objectifying work of the term ‘the homeless.’ When we speak of ‘the homeless,’ we mobilize a pathological category that directs attention to an individual, as if living without housing is a personal experience rather than a social phenomenon.

–Craig Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*.<sup>25</sup>

### Homelessness Terminology

I hesitate to follow general practice and use “homelessness” and “the homeless” to name this lived reality; to do so is to carry forward a host of assumptions and constructions that participate in systems that dehumanize and objectify people as objects of control. Therefore, I limit my use of the term homelessness, and I opt to use terms such as housing insecurity, housing deprivation, unstable housing, or conditional housing. My approach to homelessness terminology mirrors Willse’s beginning of *The Value of Homelessness*, which sets out to undo “the obvious beginning of the conversation, ‘the homeless.’ The putatively generic category of ‘homeless’ actually signifies something very specific.” Homelessness is a material state and “a political-economic effect of racial capital’s urban disorganizations.”<sup>26</sup> It is not just an effect of disorganizations but the product of specific structures; the housing system has a meta-architecture that orders bodies.

I more regularly use the phrase “experiences of homelessness,” but I do so as a grounding technique, not to ontologize what experiences of homelessness are comprised of. The limits of language persist, and terminology is subject to constant deconstruction. There is always a danger of reinscribing the terms of emphasis and critique. The use of language does not function to essentialize because “homelessness is not a state with an

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<sup>25</sup> Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 12.

essence.” Willse reminds us that homelessness, similar to economic disenfranchisement, “is an effect of shifting racial, economic, social, and political formations.”<sup>27</sup> Poverty is bound up with configurations of homelessness. While the two are intertwined, I focus on homelessness specifically for this dissertation. A study of poverty may include homelessness as a topic, but it does not require it. And it does not demand a continued focus on homelessness and the issues that relate specifically to the language and the material conditions marked by homelessness. This means I follow the term homelessness throughout archives, public discourse, and policy. Poverty is present throughout but does not guide my research or where I insert my critical questions.

Terminology such as “the homeless” and “homelessness” – without specific interrogation – is not adequate to name or identify this complex reality of the participating features of the homelessness-housing system. Counter to their intent, programs and policies that focus on fixing or solving homelessness can reinforce essentialist and reductionist assumptions surrounding “homelessness.”<sup>28</sup> I am not suggesting there is a simple escape from the problem of terminology. Increasing proliferation of destigmatizing language remains necessary but limited in its potential to dislodge positivist and moralist underlying frameworks that structure the institutions that maintain the housing system. Willse’s Foucauldian biopolitical insight is that we are all “housed,” which is to say we are all caught in the housing system. The housing system disciplines bodies across the spectrum of housing, which means “to be housed is to be

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<sup>27</sup> Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 11-12.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

disciplined into ways of living and being that allow for forms of security and protection afforded within a neoliberal economy.”<sup>29</sup> In other words, neoliberal systems shape our relationship to housing such that having shelter correlates with access to supports that sustain life, while lacking stable housing coincides with fewer civic and bodily protections. Neoliberal economies condition us such that housing stability reduces vulnerability, while unstably housed people face increased precarity.<sup>30</sup>

### Sociological Perspective

How does homelessness become something to be known and managed?

—Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*<sup>31</sup>

In addition to working directly with clients, my position at Bridge included fielding requests for research subjects, organization partnerships, and probing conversations. The conversations raised questions about how people experiencing homelessness become research subjects, program participants, and knowledge holders for new projects alongside their positions in more significant political and economic systems. I began noticing and searching for when and where “the homeless” or homelessness appears in research, design projects, and public discourse.

### Sociology’s Beginnings

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<sup>29</sup> Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 11.

<sup>30</sup> See Kim Dovey, “The Silent Complicity of Architecture” in *Habitus: A Sense of Place*, Routledge, 2005. Edited by Emma Rooksby and Jean Hillier, R. See also Dovey’s chapter three, “Silent Complicities: Bourdieu, Habitus, Field” in Dovey, *Becoming Places*, London: Routledge, 2010.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

Craig Willse names sociology as the beginning of studies about homelessness. There were already commonly understood categorizations of “the homeless” that included typologies and terminology circulated in public consciousness before being formalized in a discipline. Willse shows that U. S. sociology remains plagued with quantitative and qualitative positivism<sup>32</sup>, as shown in the figure “the homeless.” Willse claims the Chicago School’s development of ethnographic fieldwork began with a study on “the homeless,” specifically the character type “the hobo.” In 1923, the University of Chicago Press published Nels Anderson’s book *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man*. Anderson writes about his experience as a self-described hobo in this; today, it might be called a participant observer ethnography. Anderson incorporates positivism in his assessment of hobos.<sup>33</sup> Anderson’s work is an early example of the positivist epistemologies and methodologies (post)critical<sup>34</sup> anthropologists and ethnographers continue to disentangle from the fields’ politics of representation and positivist practices of figuration.

Figurization of “the homeless” includes interweaving discrimination and oppression based on class, race, gender, sexuality, religion, and ability, obscures how social problems are framed. The issue referred to as homelessness is not a separate issue from racism or ableism; it is a phenomenon that goes beyond the ownership or access to

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<sup>32</sup> Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 64.

<sup>33</sup> Nels Anderson, *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man. A Study Prepared for the Chicago Council of Social Agencies under the Direction of the Committee on Homeless Men* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923, 1961), xxiii.

<sup>34</sup> Anders, A. D., & Lester, J. N. “Examining Loss: Postcritical Ethnography and the Pursuit of What Could Be Otherwise,” *Qualitative Inquiry*, 25(9-10), (2019): 925-935. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800418784327>.

housing; it is also a meeting point for histories of structural inequality. So, naming homelessness as the ground of my questions is not a focus on a “field of study;” it is a study of several fields that coalesce into the figuration of subjects to be governed and reformed.<sup>35</sup> Often missing, Willse reminds us, is a “mode of analysis attentive to the interimplication of racial, sexual, and gender regulation through housing insecurity and deprivation.”<sup>36</sup> Fields of contestation are crisscrossed with racism, transphobia, ableism, reproductive cis-heteropatriarchy, and classism. The field(s) of study addressing homelessness suffer(s) from a figure bias. Philosophically, the fallacy of accepting homelessness as a stable object relates to the problem of the metaphysics of presence as well as overdetermined anthropomorphism.

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<sup>35</sup> In the United States, “The homeless” and “the poor” are often referred to as “our neighbors” acknowledging our nation’s moral obligation to be responsible, in some way, to our nation’s poor. Many people admit to the responsibility to offer support (in limited and contingent ways) for our poverty stricken. (The conversation is much more contentious when one is asked whether they consider “illegal” immigrants who suffer from poverty to be deemed neighbor) However, the way our neighbor is talked about constructs an image that denies the complexities of diverse personality and experiences.

<sup>36</sup> Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 66.



Figure 8 New York - "The Tramp Nuisance - Incidents in the Everyday Life of Tramp in the City and Country" 1877.



Figure 9 "Boston Street Characters - Children of the Poor" 1851.





Figure 10 "Boston Street Characters - The Watchman" 1851. Examples of representative histories of the characterization and figuration of "the homeless," "street characters," and "the poor."



Figure 11 Harper's Weekly, "Mexican Burden Bearers," 1851.



Figure 12 Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion, "Life in Town: City Sketches," 1851.



Figure 13 An Evening Scene in Madison Park - "The Tramps Free Lodging Place" 1877.



Figure 14 Canada - Scene at "The Tramps' Paradise" in Montreal 1884.



Figure 15 Timothy Schmalz, “Homeless Jesus,” a bronze sculpture located in front of churches. The sculptures have taken the form of representational images of “the homeless.”



Figure 16 Timothy Schmalz, “Whatsoever You Do,” also referred to as “Jesus as a Beggar.”

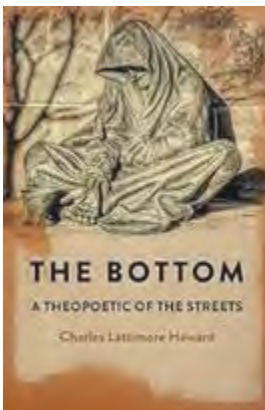


Figure 17 Cover for *The Bottom: A Theopoetic of the Streets* by Charles Lattimore Howard, Ph. D., Chaplain at the University of Pennsylvania, published in 2020 by Changemakers Books.

## Whiteness and Sociology

We are using the idea of *whiteness* deliberately to emphasize that the dominance of Western knowledge systems is inherently racialized.<sup>37</sup> . . . The whiteness of social work is a consequence of the whiteness of its knowledge.<sup>38</sup> . . . Social work was born white. It emerged in the Anglosphere – UK and US – from deep within the European Enlightenment.<sup>39</sup> [emphasis added]

–Sonia M. Tascon and Jim Ife

Social work is not unique in its ethics of care, but it does represent the birthplace of a professional ethos that focuses on "distant caring" – a form of care characterized as "the care of strangers in a nonreciprocal relational arrangement bound by values and techniques of distance."<sup>40</sup> This research suggests that architecture and the built environment are the material embodiments that facilitated the development and refinement of such practices of distant care.<sup>41</sup> Tascon and Ife discuss the profound and potentially irreparable chasm between theory and practice within the field, where much of the professional discourse is predicated on practice. This dichotomy is emblematic of the larger epistemological binaries that I explore, particularly between the disciplines of architecture and theology, each possessing an internal dissonance in their conceptualizations of theory and practice. Architecture narrates its identity through its practices, while theology and philosophy esteem contemplation and conceptual reflection, often on inspecting practices themselves.

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<sup>37</sup> Sonia M. Tascon and Jim Ife, *Disrupting Whiteness in Social Work*, (New York: Routledge, 2021), 1.

<sup>38</sup> Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Sonia Tascon, "Disrupting White Epistemologies: De-binarising Social Work," in *Disrupting Whiteness in Social Work*, 9.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 9.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

Social work engages with the binary constructs of modernity, addressing the needs of those "othered" by the modern project, as explained by Tascon.<sup>42</sup> The persistent divide between theory and practice sustains the mechanisms of coloniality, which, "as a relationship of power founded by colonialism, takes place in the umbral spaces between these two worlds: where thought and action do not meet, and where responsibility is disavowed."<sup>43</sup> This bifurcation manifests in both the administrative sphere, which separates conceptualization from enactment, and in the practical domains of social work, architecture, and the interplay of theology and philosophy.

The dissertation posits that theological language and constructs shaped the nascent field of social work, which, in turn, has reciprocated by enriching the lexicon of care within and beyond ecclesiastical contexts. This exchange has introduced a vocabulary derived from epistemologies, ontologies, and technologies of health and safety, encompassing terms such as accountability, assessment, authority, best interests, capacity, capability, compliance, evidence, expertise, rights, services, supervision, protection, safety, family, and care itself.<sup>44</sup>

### Religion and Sociology

The narrative thrust of [the book *Sidewalk*] suggests that to be human is at the very least to exhibit a capacity to understand and navigate codes of moral conduct.

—Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, 15.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, 17.

<sup>44</sup> See also, *The Capacity Contract: Intellectual Disability and the Question of Citizenship* by Stacy Clifford Simpican (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

<sup>45</sup> Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 74.

Homelessness grounds my questions about the ways in which religious and medical conceptions of disease and health shape modern approaches to surveillance, displacement, and confinement. The pathologization of individuals and groups are tied to security policies. Health and safety entangled relationships crystalize in policies and operations that take place as a result of political declarations of emergencies and crises leading to “sweeps” of people living or appearing to live unhoused. Ideas surrounding sanitation have long histories of influencing the provision of city infrastructure. The organization and policing of space reflects changing disease theories, i. e. miasma theory to germ theory (Dr. John Snow’s role in the discovery of cholera’s etiology is exemplary).<sup>46</sup> Many of the “solutions” to the “problem” of homelessness carry artifacts from eras of confinement and the emergence of charities and philanthropy. What are the theological categories and religious histories that provide insight into representations of homelessness?

Illness, mental health, and substance use are most often associated with homelessness and are the most rhetorically referenced causes of homelessness. Poverty, cisheteronormativity, and inequality often escape everyday explanations of chronic homelessness. The reasons for/characteristics of homelessness are plastic and can have multiple and often contradictory explanations in public discourse. The identification of “personal problems” as the basis of “social problems” intends to touch on the care, sympathy, and benevolent feeling of a liberal public. Locating unwanted social effects in

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<sup>46</sup> Tulchinsky TH. John Snow, Cholera, the Broad Street Pump; Waterborne Diseases Then and Now. *Case Studies in Public Health*. 2018:77–99. doi: 10.1016/B978-0-12-804571-8.00017-2. Epub 2018 Mar 30. PMID: PMC7150208.

individuals' plight justifies taking actions that directly affect targeted bodies, obscured by vague references to a "homeless population " as occupying a specific place or problem area in a city. Neoliberal capitalism, property ownership, and de facto development and construction practices escape accountability for the production of housing insecurity in the everyday representations found in news media, social media, and quotidian conversation. The questions that have motivated this dissertation stem from the challenges of reorienting discourses related to homelessness in Boston. These obstacles arise from discursive, epistemological, and ontological foundations governing how architecture and the production of space function in social relationships. In addition, architects and planners are solicited to contribute to the creation of new ways of inhabiting space, but it is likely the built environment will mirror systemic power structures. Architects and builders (where there is distinction, it typically resides in the designing process) are invited to intervene in the production of space in ways outsider community members and disciplines are not. Such inquiries concern the complex relationship between place-making and meaning-making, body-marking and spatial-marking, and include the following questions about the entanglement of concepts with material arrangements coming into being. Stigma (marking) for example, is a concept that is also entangled with physical manifestation (marks). Some of these questions include:

1. How does the discursive repetition of place-based stigma, like "blight" and "open-air drug markets," participate in the construction process?
2. How does it move and stick to bodies associated with the representations and images constructed in these scenes?

3. What counternarratives can disrupt housing stigmatization?
4. What philosophies and theologies transform vulnerable populations into targets of moral judgment and suspicion? And what counter-philosophies and theologies disrupt such moralizing suspicion?

The people most vulnerable to housing insecurity often have a co-occurrence of mental health or substance use. The public narratives surrounding homelessness are shaped by embedded assumptions about mental health and substance use - assumptions about agency, responsibility, morality, and charity shape approaches to treatment and public policies. This leads to important theological and religious questions: What categories and histories have informed clinical frameworks around mental health, mind-body dualism, and concepts of reason vs. unreason? How have histories of homelessness intersected with notions of madness and incapability? What architectures correlate with these developments? Rather than separate spheres of concern, these inquiries reflect the interrelated dimensions of the same non-directional mechanism: who/what is placed—where/when is one placed—what are the conditions of placement—what condition befits the who/what in that place. Theological and religious perspectives may offer novel insights into the (de)humanizing or divinization processes that construct who or what is positioned and, in particular, how conceptions of wholeness, holiness, or worth have shaped understandings of people and spaces.

## CONCLUSION

Redirected questions from, how might theologies and philosophies of becoming respond to feelings of resignation, weariness, and disaffection beyond clinical categories of coping with the *wounds that remain*? What are the material conditions that wound, mark, or move? Shelly Rambo asks in *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*, “To what degree is the central narrative of death/life in Christianity able to attest to this



complex experience of remaining in the aftermath of violence?”<sup>47</sup> How might theological frameworks intervene for people struggling to *remain* in their faith traditions and the world? The direction of the question poses toward the person experiencing traumas, such as traumatic events associated with the experiences of homelessness. I redirect the question; I ask the reader to reflect on their relationship to housing, public space, and conceptions of homelessness.

In other words, a major aim of this work is to deconstruct dominant categories of bodies out of place by asking, How are places, and by the transmission of forces, bodies defined by the binaries such as public-private (*Lt. sanctum*), profane-sacred (*Lt. sanctus*), and criminal-sanctioned (*Lt. sanctio*)?<sup>48</sup> How might a deeper critique of the constructions of normality-abnormality that are tied to material, spatial locations help disrupt some of the dehumanizing effects of the politics of homelessness? To keep from staying at the hypothetical level, I stress the need to continue to ask why the proposed efforts are limited or thwarted in political and legal networks.

Architecture becomes a vector not because it is a privileged site for ethical practice but because architecture firms, designers, and urban planners have been established as a vector for influencing the built environment in the locations I am focusing on, such as Boston Common, Mass and Cass, and Long Island. Critical architecture research and practice combines with theological insights about justice to

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<sup>47</sup> Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 6.

<sup>48</sup> Catherine Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement* (Columbia University Press, 2014), 6.

challenge material and spatial inequalities within the public sphere by offering alternative realities and spaces.<sup>49</sup> Concerns about the experiences of homelessness lead to further exploration of the conditions of possibility for social-spatial justice. The events that participate in increased vulnerability, precarity, and stigmatization require more critique from a theological and philosophical perspective to disrupt conceptions of the human tied to place and property and combine the hierarchies of life with the ordering of the built environment that leads to the construction of infrastructures of entangled pursuits of care and control.<sup>50</sup>

1. How do philosophies and political frameworks participate (explicitly or implicitly) in the construction of the built environment, specifically related to ideas about house and home as they relate to displacement, ownership, rootedness, and identity?
2. How does homelessness discourse construct identities and moral characterization in relationship to locality and materiality?

My questions about the issues of homelessness center on everyday experiences of the built environment. I am also interested in the discourses and archives that participate in developing homelessness as a social problem. This dissertation opens space to reflect more intentionally on how discursive, institutional, philosophical, and theological discourses co-construct the conception of homelessness. In the process, I aim to explore

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<sup>49</sup> Postcolonial, liberation, feminist, and queer theologies are formative. For example, queer theologies – inspired by Marcella Althaus-Reid’s radical approach – embrace nontraditional and extra-theological ways of knowing to allow for queer bodies to speak and move without being bound by dominant languages.

<sup>50</sup> Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (University of Chicago Press, 1989, 2001).

the atmospheres of contestation at space-event thresholds where who or what is “neighbor” comes under question. Thresholds dilate in this dissertation to examine the spatial atmospheres at different scales of relational events. To pursue social justice and practice neighbor-love more critically and compassionately, it is necessary to interrogate both the ideas about living together in propinquity and our participation in the systems that perpetuate precarity linked to housing and “the home.”

### Homelessness and the Biopolitics of Public Space

The multiple claims to space put into question the legitimacy of calling a space public. The following chapters developed with the politics of homelessness in mind. I examine and contextualize a series of events in Boston, from the closure of the Long Island Shelter to “Operation Clean Sweep.” Using the lens of spatial-social construction, I explore some theoretical frameworks that could help uncover, understand, and represent the agents, actors, and forces at play in the geographies of Mass and Cass and similar public spaces in cities. I seek tools to reframe and reticulate geo-social-spatial narratives that unequally affect people living without stable housing. The relationship between precarity and property takes a specific form in the U. S. housing system; the relationship between property and ownership, housing and domesticity, and real estate and wealth is founded upon histories of racism, sexism, and classism in the United States.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION:

SPATIAL JUSTICE, THEOPOETICS, and ARCHITECTURE

An act of hospitality can only be poetic.

– Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*

For nearly every injustice in this world, there is an architecture, a plan, a design that has been built to sustain it.

– Bryan C. Lee Jr.<sup>1</sup>

**SPATIALIZATION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE**

This dissertation exemplifies my commitment to exploring the creative yet also potentially destructive possibilities for just forms of conviviality that emerge at the intersection of poetics and politics. I aim to make tangible the physical-conceptual manifestations of institutional ideologies and socio-religious values that shape this intersection. My conception of justice has been shaped by feminist and womanist theologies, Black, Latin, and queer liberation theologies, eco-feminists, and cosmopolitical theologies and philosophies. My use of the language of *theopoetics* does not represent a school of thought apart from these theologies and philosophies but names, from the beginning, a commitment to relationality, porosity, and processes of becoming. A theopoetics that is open and *apophatic* can accommodate multiple voices and contexts without forcing a singular path or source of knowledge of the sort traditionally reflected

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<sup>1</sup> Bryan C. Lee Jr. is the founder of Colloqate Design. Bryan C. Lee Jr. and Terri Peters, “Q+A: Bryan C. Lee Jr. Links Design Justice to Architecture.” *Architect*, September 14, 2021. [https://www.architectmagazine.com/practice/q-a-bryan-c-lee-jr-links-design-justice-to-architecture\\_o](https://www.architectmagazine.com/practice/q-a-bryan-c-lee-jr-links-design-justice-to-architecture_o).  
Bryan

in systematic theology. The combination of theopoetics and spatial justice centers experience and contexts as more-than-human constellations of becoming and planetary conviviality in hopes of bridging social justice and the unequal social effects of spatial configurations.

The choice of architecture shapes my theological and philosophical concerns, but it is also a practical choice. Architecture is a point of intervention in the decision-making apparatuses that influence the site, shape, and accessibility of buildings.<sup>2</sup> I focus on architecture's relationship to social issues through the envisioning, planning, and construction of physical structures along with the resultant fields that permeate through and between objects to include buildings, objects, and subjects which might not immediately be labeled architecture. Still, throughout the chapters, I will expand on what architecture means as a building or an object with the help of architects and architecture historians.

By applying theories of sociospatial justice and critically analyzing architecture's role, this dissertation makes tangible the ideological and socio-religious underpinnings of inequality manifest in the built environment. It charts a path toward spatial justice through nuanced understandings of complex social dynamics enacted through and upon physical configurations of space.

### The Spatial is the Social

Sociospatial justice calls for examining how spatial arrangements become tied to social dynamics like poverty and homelessness. In *Between the Social and the Spatial*,

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<sup>2</sup> Jan Vranken, Prologue "From the Social to the Spatial: Stepping Stones on My Way to a Conceptual Framework" in *Between the Social and the Spatial*, Katrien De Boyser and Jürgen Friedrichs, eds. (Routledge, 2016).

the editors argue that poverty, like homelessness, is a multidimensional concept, but the links are often undetectable within a bounded disciplinarity. Jan Vranken, professor of political and social science, opens the volume with a prologue that attempts to make the links between the social and spatial more evident.<sup>3</sup> Vranken's work examines how macro-level societal organizations and meso-level institutions collectively influence experiences of poverty and exclusion. His use of Marx's theorization of surplus population brings attention to the continued presence of the social groups that make up those living in poverty or at risk of poverty.<sup>4</sup> A group's production factor, their labor, determines<sup>5</sup>

The most important point of clarity for Vranken's self-described intellectual trajectory from the social to the spatial was the realization that his pursuit of understanding poverty should not center on "the poor." As Vranken writes, it became quite clear "that it was not 'the poor' that should become the object of my attention, but poverty — as a structural feature of society."<sup>6</sup> He found that he needed to link poverty's macro and micro levels. His qualitative research sought to explore the heterogeneity of "the" poor and learn more about the "structures of everyday life of the poor." And "Since qualitative research often starts from a local situation, it revealed the importance of the spatial dimension and brought me closer to linking the social and spatial dimensions of

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<sup>3</sup> Vranken coordinated the FACIT -project (Faith-based Organizations and Social Exclusion in European Cities). FACIT published a book of the same name in 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Foucault, "About the Concept of the 'Dangerous Individual' in 19th Century Legal Psychiatry," *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, Vol. 1, pp. 1-18, 1978. Pergamon Press. Printed in the U.S.A. Translated by Alain Baudot\*\* and Jane Couchman. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-2527\(78\)90020-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-2527(78)90020-1). See also, Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 252.

<sup>5</sup> Vranken, "From the Social to the Spatial," xviii.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, xix.

poverty,” he explains.<sup>7</sup> But before he arrived at this point, “three more stepping-stones had been laid out.” He lays out an in depth description of his work on social exclusion and the role of social networks. I am interested in how his theoretical reflection helps to describe my conceptual approach to the current project. I realized I should provide more stepping stones to the dissertation's current form and content.

Micro-models, Vranken explains, “are mostly developed by economists and psychologists.” “These types of explanations are still culminating public and political perception, whether they explain social exclusion in terms of personal deficiency, deviant behaviour or a social accident.” They constitute cases of “blaming the victim.” At a macro-level, “society’s organisation is the problem, not poverty.” The meso-level, between micro and macro, is the institutional level.<sup>8</sup>

While networks may allow for more openness than siloed organizations, networks also have restrictions, as Vranken explains. “Gatekeepers—policymakers or administrators are good examples. Because they occupy strategic positions in a network, they have the power to decide whether or not to allow the flow of social commodities to go through.”<sup>9</sup> The concentration of social exclusion and spatial segregation “constituted the most visible facets of a larger set of problems.”<sup>10</sup> A spatial dimension often strengthens social cohesion at the city level. “If a part of the group identity is based on feelings of belonging to a certain space, no-go areas and feelings of insecurity for non-

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<sup>7</sup> Vranken, “From the Social to the Spatial,” xx.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, xxiii.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, xxiii.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, xxiv.

group members entering this space are generated.”<sup>11</sup> Looking ahead, Vranken poses important questions for social science to consider in further studying poverty and social exclusion: "Which relations do we still need to identify and to explore in the field of 'poverty and social exclusion'?" He answers, "The most evident one is between 'the social' and 'the spatial.' Do people at (or outside) society's margins perceive and use space in fundamentally different ways? Are they in a position to alter spatial structures by using them?"<sup>12</sup> This points to the need for nuanced analysis of power dynamics between groups in relational and spatialized terms.

People at society's margins have been allocated to certain places in the city, of which the rest of society has a very low opinion; but for people in poverty these sites often constitute a refuge. can these places then become the locus for constructing networks and cultural patterns, thus providing them with a sense of identity? Or are people in poverty and social exclusion just monads in an otherwise over-organised social environment?<sup>13</sup>

Navigating the complex tapestry of sociospatial justice involves understanding how marginalized communities can cultivate their own cultural identities within spaces of refuge, while also critically examining the systemic structures that perpetuate homelessness. It challenges us to look beyond individual circumstances and consider the overarching power dynamics at play - dynamics that are partly, but substantially, constructed and maintained through spatial controls and exclusions.

As I expressed more fully in the preface, my approach to sociospatial justice is deeply intertwined with concerns related to experiences of homelessness. It starts with

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<sup>11</sup> Vranken, "From the Social to the Spatial," xxv.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, xxvi.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, xxvi.



the premise that there is a distinction between identifying, studying, and diagnosing individuals experiencing homelessness—gathering data and stories in an attempt to trace life events back to a root cause— versus an interrogation of the systems that shape the figuration of “the homeless” and the conceptualization of homelessness. Homelessness does not have an essence or a stable subject; rather, it signifies a site of aggregate power acted out through material constructions and conceptual norms of habitation and public presentation. This approach mirrors the interrogation of whiteness by reversing the would-be-observers’ gaze. A study into homelessness that is committed to justice must recognize the authors’/observers’ privilege, position, and power and necessitates an exploration into the concept of homelessness, into the politics of representation, and into a complicity with the very systems and constructs that create homelessness as a subject of inquiry and intervention.

## **ARCHITECTURE (BIG “A” TERMINOLOGY)**

### *The definition(s) of architecture*

Homelessness extends beyond the simple lack of a house or shelter. Therefore, a comprehensive examination of homelessness—that aims toward praxis—inevitably encounters architecture’s role in shaping and responding to these complex sociospatial dynamics. Architecture sits at the nexus of the creative and destructive aspects of physical structure and material order. A dynamic account of architecture becomes crucial for influencing and navigating the political, economic, and cultural (closed) ordering systems while remaining open to the creative potential of (open) (re)ordering systems.

While architecture can be defined in restrictive ways that stay close to the modern conceptualization of architecture and “the architect,” a reconceptualization of architecture

holds the potential to embrace materiality that is open to field interactivity, human-nonhuman assemblies and material ecologies. The definition of architecture, similar to religion, is wide ranging and context specific. But for the purposes of this extradisciplinary engagement, I will present some standard definitions as a point of departure. The definitions will be critiqued, but they cannot be easily dismissed because of the power of big “A” architecture to shape a field, a practice, and an epistemology with deep European roots.

Architect, historian, theorist, and critic Kenneth Frampton has written extensively about the core characteristics of architecture. Frampton’s *Studies in Tectonic Culture: The Poetics of Construction in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture* was an early influence on my developing interest in the conversations between theopoetics, philosophy, and architecture. Frampton consistently engages with philosophy and occasionally speaks to profane, sacred, and secular constructions. I was drawn to his advocacy for more consideration of architecture’s tectonic and topologic qualities (and his arguments for typologic considerations to a lesser extent). Frampton’s histories, critiques, and definitions of architecture provide a useful starting point due to the clarity of his arguments.

The evolving definitions of architecture over time parallel shifts in the discipline’s prevailing concerns and approaches. As Frampton notes, discussions around disciplinary boundaries and what constitutes architecture are tied to the field’s preoccupation with establishing its autonomy. However, the very fluidity of architecture’s definition presents a challenge for interdisciplinary dialogue. If what falls within or outside the scope of architecture is inconsistently determined, it can be difficult to engage collaboratively with

related yet distinct fields that may have more settled boundaries and subject matters. Particularly if one aims to move beyond the definitions that have been established within theological and philosophical scholarship on religion, turning to Frampton's extensive writings on the question of what constitutes architecture may provide alternative framings.<sup>14</sup> While arguing for autonomy vis a vis, architects, historians, and theorists have posed different supportive arguments and affiliations, “be it applied science as the reality principle or supplied art as a psychosocial compensation.”<sup>15</sup> By examining how architects themselves have debated architecture's parameters and affiliations, Frampton offers critical insight for those seeking alternatives to rigid definitions. His work acknowledges architecture's fluidity while still advocating for its autonomy through differentiating its impacts beyond material structures alone.

### What is Architecture?

Architecture's self-conscious place in society and culture makes it an interesting case for a genealogy of ideas. Architecture's development mirrors epistemologies, economics, and aesthetic tastes of the day. A seemingly stable subject, given its ancient and ubiquitous association with dwelling, its development in history, its patronage, guilds, apprenticeships, justifications, professional organizations, division of labor, and economic valuation, are plastic and malleable due to its positioning amidst fields of influence (religion, science, art) that reflect changing values in society. The definitions of

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<sup>14</sup> Kenneth Frampton, “Reflections on the Autonomy of Architecture: A Critique of Contemporary Production,” in *Out of Site: A Social Criticism of Architecture*, Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, ed. (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991) 17. See also, Kenneth Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance,” in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Post-Modern Culture* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983).

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* 19.

architecture reflect the stories it tells itself. The most striking similarity I have found between theology and architecture is not through their coming together in projects to build houses of worship; it lies in the influence of the culture of the day and the culture's mythic storytelling qualities about itself.

In the same volume as Frampton's essay "Reflections on the Autonomy of Architecture," *Out of Site: A Social Criticism of Architecture*, architecture theory and history scholar Diane Ghirardo offers a necessary criticism of architecture's commitment to defining its self-identity. She argues, architecture's conceptual framework—constructed to define what is relevant to the discourse on architecture and to exclude what is deemed irrelevant—“operates to mystify architecture.”<sup>16</sup> The resultant conceptual framework produces two key disciplinary ramifications that dampen the pursuit of social justice through architecture. Philosophical pursuits of architectural autonomy serve (1) to justify its role in the identification of buildings that may legitimately be considered Architecture apart from the majority of construction and (2) to separate Architecture from “the range of ideological, political, social, and economic roles that it is designed to fulfill and that collaborate in generating the conditions for building.”<sup>17</sup>

The definitions of architecture are limited, and critics have identified the definitional problem for some time, yet the profession remains dominated by neoliberal capitalism and Euro-American epistemologies. Frampton calls architecture, in Marxian terms, “both superstructure and infrastructure,” a “frame for life” and a cultural

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<sup>16</sup> Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, *Out of Site: A Social Criticism of Architecture* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), 10.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, 10-11.

production. “Clearly,” he continues, “architecture cannot be reduced to architectural representation at any level, nor can it be passed off as large-scale sculpture.” What remains consistent throughout the history of 18th - 20th-century architecture is the persistence of schisms and paradoxes, internal contradictions, and anxiety about its place and justification in society. The position is not altogether unfamiliar to theological concerns over secularization and the changing role of religion and, subsequently, those concerns tied to the structures of religion—congregations, church leadership positions, and seminaries and universities.

Authority and influence at any moment have ripple effects on other disciplines. Science and art, for example, have played different roles in lending credibility to cultural and economic pursuits. Science and art, at different times and contexts, play a galvanizing or delineating role in projects requiring consensus. Increasing neoliberal privatization has consumed all disciplinary self-identifications. Disciplines like science and art that were once autonomous spheres of knowledge/creation have had their self-definitions eroded as they are co-opted to primarily serve commercial ends. Frampton identifies oscillating moments of “science envy” and “art envy” as extra-architectural sources for the argumentation on behalf of architectural autonomy.<sup>18</sup>

Building can and does happen outside contact with Architecture. Frampton’s distinction between building and architecture makes this clear. He stated in 1991 and restated in 2014 that architecture acts in a small domain of the built environment. He

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<sup>18</sup> These concerns are not paranoid readings of the state of architecture, the field is not guaranteed to persist and is reflected in practical changes. Similar to the increased closings of divinity schools and theological seminaries, architecture faces the elimination of departments and commissions.

describes non-architectural construction—building—as a “banal, almost metabolic activity.”<sup>19</sup> Architecture’s autonomy, grounded in the centrality of typology, Frampton argues, “is most evident in the basic difference between building and architecture: for where building tends to be organic, asymmetrical, and agglutinative, architecture tends to be orthogonal, symmetrical, and complete.” Each “tend to favor the accommodation of different kinds of institutions.”<sup>20</sup> I find Frampton’s definitions a helpful entry point into an interdisciplinary conversation because he maps out what I find to be legitimate critiques of Architecture. He argues against its co-option in an increasingly media-centric consumerist economy, but his conclusions point to a persistent tendency in the fabric of architecture—its search for a core or essence of architecture.

## THEOPOETICS

This dissertation delves into the connections between the poetics of world-making and the politics of city-building, viewing both in terms of the spatial and infrastructural consequences of housing inequality, property ownership, and displacement. The agencies, powers, and institutions that mold, shape, and texture places across various scales demand an array of critical perspectives. Homelessness is not merely a focal point for advocacy; it is also a catalyst for generating conceptual and practical questions. Events that shape the discourses on homelessness unveil intertwined agents, sometimes working in sync, at times in conflict, but interacting, simultaneously, within shared spaces, bodies, or narratives. Analyzing these complexities through a narrow mono-

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<sup>19</sup> Frampton, “Reflections on the Autonomy of Architecture,” 17.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* 22.

disciplinary lens can obscure the true nature of how power influences the structure and function of the built environment. The questions concerning homelessness raise spatial and material issues surrounding the governance of space, property ownership, and the construction and maintenance of sites of care and confinement. These topics are explored through an examination of the interplay between poetics (poiesis) and architecture (arche–techne), specifically how bodies, both organic and nonorganic, emerge through processes of creation and rupture, formation and deformation, arrangement and ordering of life, determinants of affect and proximity, and material ecologies.

*Theopoetics and De-Logia. . . intro to Theopoetics terminology*<sup>21</sup>

Theopoetics diverges from theologies dominated by logocentric epistemologies. Substituting "-poetics" for "-ology" signals an embrace of unknowing and unsaying, a welcome resource for a project concerned with the limits of language and the pleasure of expression and procession. Theopoetics in this dissertation frames an approach to philosophies of religion that will help to deconstruct the totalizations that persist – well beyond theology as such – in language and tradition.

Theopoetics appears in different historical contexts and is not beholden to a particular school or methodology, although it has a few regular contemporary contributors and some renewal in continental philosophy of religion and process theology. Before focusing on Catherine Keller's mapping of theopoetics and briefly

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21 Callid Keefe-Perry, *Way to Water* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014). Keefe-Perry attempts to describe the development of theopoetics in a sequential fashion. Keller's account provides a more rhizomatic picture.

discussing her use of the concept, it is worth mentioning some scholars whose work resonates with a fluid definition of theopoetics.

Roland Faber and Jeremy Fackenthal introduce the “manifold of theopoetics” in the Introduction of *Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness*. The book project begins with the “polyphony of the poetics” that appears in the interaction of the world and the self “as part of our ever-moving identities” and is enfolded with the “history of the divine.”<sup>22</sup> For Faber and Fackenthal, multiplicity is a key aspect of theopoetics. Multiplicity, with its Whiteheadian/Deleuzian rhizome, is reflected across the chapters. Faber,<sup>23</sup> in a lecture at Claremont, describes process theology as a region and not a pinned down field of study or methodology. In an attempt to define process theology, Faber explains that he often relies on the term theopoetics to highlight the difficulty of finding the language that can stand for a definition of process though, that encourages one “not just to adapt to but to create new theological language.”<sup>24</sup> It might be the “essence of process theology to be an uncontrollable undertaking in the infinite adventure of God-talk, and consciously so, in modes that I came to name ‘theopoetics.’” Similarly, I do not claim to give *the* definition or the proper history of theopoetics. Each author’s articulation of theopoetics takes on a new characteristic, which is encouraged in a space

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<sup>22</sup> Faber and Fackenthal, *Theopoetic Folds*, 2.

See also, Miller, David. “Introduction.” In *Why Persimmons? and Other Poems: Transformations of Theology in Poetry*, by Stanley R. Hopper. Atlanta: Scholars, 1987. David Miller, “Theopoetry or Theopoetics?” *Cross Currents* 60.1 (2010) 6–23

<sup>23</sup> Roland Faber, *God as Poet of the World: Exploring Process Theologies* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), 2008, see also, Faber, “Process Theology as Theopoetics.”

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*



that resists closed systems and limiting language. Rather, like Faber's explication of process theology, I find theopoetics functions add an "opening space."

You would not be incorrect if you were expecting theopoetics to be about the interplay of theological language, imagery, and metaphor with poetry. L. Callid Keefe-Perry, for example, maintains a close relationship with poetry in mapping the history of the term theopoetics in *Way to Water: A Theopoetics Primer*.<sup>25</sup> Keefe-Perry provides a useful overview of theopoetic directions, concluding by recommending applications for sermons, pastoral care, worship, spiritual formation and social action.<sup>26</sup> He acknowledges process philosophers like Catherine Keller and Roland Faber, dedicating a chapter to their emphasis on becoming. Keefe-Perry identifies process theology as an important but recent development distinct from earlier theopoetic streams like Hopper, Wilder and Alves. Describing this as a "shift" implies greater continuity than existed, while "stream" appropriately denotes distinction without opposition. Keefe-Perry expresses his poetics-centric view, describing a process view as "a markedly different experience" than a literary weighted approach. Overall, he helpfully outlines theopoetic terrain for both academy and broader community. Although Keefe-Perry implies his closer alignment with arcs that are not implementing thought from Alfred North Whitehead, he does give an overall positive review of process theopoetics.

### *Event of Becoming*

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<sup>25</sup> Keefe-Perry, *Way to Water*, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, 12.

In this dissertation I focus on Keller's description of theopoetics.<sup>27</sup> Theopoetics acts as a medium for an interdisciplinarity that is more welcoming than the boundedness the logics of -ologies bring. Keeping the theo may seem like a barrier to extended interdisciplinary communication, but following Catherine Keller's description of theopoetics offers an approach that "would neither ban nor impose God but keep in play between all our discourses the poetics, the poiesis - the ancient Greek term for creating, making - by which meaning materializes."<sup>28</sup> The theos that remains in this current context would not be a representation of the ontotheological God, but rather an abundantly multiple theos that can be recognized and challenged through liberation, womanist, queer, Black, eco-feminist, and radical theologies. This approach neither bans nor imposes God-talk. In mapping the "incongruent history of the concept theopoiesis," Keller redirects the readers' orientation to God and poetics. Keller frames the chapter "The Becoming of Theopoetics: A Brief, Incongruent History" for an interdisciplinary audience. She frames the discussion by stating, "I do not propose to solve the God-problem. That has been brilliantly done already, over and over, with old theism certifying or old materialism disproving God and "His" existence. The solutions simply do not matter much; they do not work outside their own circles.... Might we then reconsider, at some distance from the ology of theology or any of the other circles of insider logic, the notion of theopoetics? In particular, in the present context, might we experiment with a theopoetics of material solidarity?"

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<sup>27</sup> In this attempt to philosophically bring theopoetics of architecture together, the meaning of poiesis becomes key.

<sup>28</sup> Catherine Keller, "The Becoming of Theopoetics: A Brief, Incongruent History," 106.

Theopoetics is a boundary term that could fail at inviting or dismissing theos. But a “God-boundary” is necessary for the current context of exploring the themes of proximity, neighbor-love, and planetary conviviality with insight from seemingly distant disciplines such as theology and architecture. Theopoiesis, Keller explains, turns the “boundary into a node.”<sup>29</sup> Theos in theopoiesis is not predetermined, unchanging. “God” is in the making (poiesis), in process, emergent in the event. My reading of theopoiesis in the work of Keller not only accommodates a conversation about material assemblies but also reaches toward them. A nodal meeting implies a transformation in relation. Neither discipline is unilaterally the teacher or the student. In an actual encounter, which I seek to catalyze but cannot guarantee, the multiple parties approach not as experts but as participants that move through the nodal change; they are not simply transported together. Architecture and theology may be recognizable, but there will often be times when they do not match the schema the other has in mind. I am dangerously anthropomorphizing and, therefore, misrepresenting the disciplines as if they are stable or monolithic. Still, it is an attempt to foster a spirit of playfulness and experimentation that might allow for a creative meeting across seemingly distant disciplines.

Theopoetics, which carries a process-informed character, describes something that invites further engagement with materiality and creativity that expands across divine creativity and material making. In response to John Caputo’s theopoetic conception of the “insistence not existence,” of God, Keller sees more of a connection to process metaphysics than Caputo likes to accept. The line between insists and exists is less of a cut and more of a fold in Keller’s theopoetics. She explains, “The eventiveness of

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<sup>29</sup> Keller, “The Becoming of Theopoetics,” 106.

becoming demands resistance to the binary of substantial existence and eventive insistence. We access this insubstantial becoming only as poiesis, creativity.”<sup>30</sup> Rather than “insist on God’s existence,” Keller recombines the present terminology to argue for “a more insistent poiesis.” Described in terms of an event, she continues, “Not only ‘God’ but ‘existence’ become more eventive, not just in the occasional happening that blossoms visibly but up and down, in a bottom-less becomingness.”<sup>31</sup> All the way up and all the way down; I find affinities with the language of multiscalar moments of becoming. Each scale, from the microcosm of the “all the way down” - in scale and organization, not in a hierarchy - to the macrocosm “all the way up” - in complexity, not in transcendence. The significance of scale becomes crucial when examining instances of material organization in the upcoming chapters.

This embrace of events of becoming has combined with apophatic unknowability within theopoetic atmospheres. Theos remains an acknowledgment of the responsibility to account for theology’s “own constructions — its poiesis of logos, of theos.” Theos is not a sign of the reinscription of the masculine God-head, but it remains in theopoetics as a recognition of the persistence of theos; however, theos “the word and so whatever it signifies,” Keller explains “remains a cloudy mirror, an enigma of what we have become and what we might yet materialize.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, 113.

<sup>31</sup> Keller, “The Becoming of Theopoetics,” 113.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, 114.

Keller formulates “poiesis means materialization”<sup>33</sup> to emphasize the materiality of poetics. Poetics is not a perfect synonym for materiality, and neither is poiesis. In modern language, poetry registers as being solely immaterial. The emphasis here is also on an action, a process of becoming. It is neither the “raw material” nor the “completed form” but a moment of making, creating, not *ex nihilo* and not automatically (where the *auto*-self acts individually of its own will) but in relation. The challenge of defining poiesis for contemporary readers is that each definition or synonym resides in an already bifurcated common understanding of thinking and making, matter and form. One of the goals of the current project is to think through the implications of connecting poiesis—and its more poetic moments, intimately with materialization. Materialization signals physical processes, but political, economic, and social processes materialize in various ways in everyday life.

In the final chapter, I return to the material entanglement in the work of Keller’s *Cloud of the Impossible*. I suggest that a theopoetics of multiplicity can offer a more “polydoxical” approach to Architecture. Approaches deconstructing disciplinarity through cross-pollination participate in systems remaking Earth across scales through terrapoiesis, a multiscalar making and shaping. One of the concluding questions will be, how does a theopoetics of the earth, or a terrapoetics “resistant to every heteronormative reproductivity or capitalist productivity” converge with efforts that architects and planners are currently pursuing in their climate justice work?<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, 114.

<sup>34</sup> Keller, “The Becoming of Theopoetics,” 118.

Poiesis in Continental Philosophy

Poiesis has been a useful connecting concept for relating theopoetics to architecture. The associated notions of materialization, making, creativity, event, and process come into play at this conversational node. To free poiesis from being overly identified with lyric and linguistic arts, it is helpful to revisit some of the ancient Greek uses of the word. And understanding by poetry, and later fine arts, became the defining representations of poiesis - in philosophy. Many of the works focusing on poiesis come from aesthetics and routinely return to Aristotle's definitions of Greek virtues of thought and activity. But by the time you read poiesis during the establishment of classical Greek philosophy, poiesis as making has been separated from *techne* as not making but know-how in the making, not the action of performing the skill. Aristotle also makes clear the categorized distinctions between poiesis (making) and praxis (acting or doing). Therefore, it is common to read a philosophical text on *poiesis* that does not engage *techne* or read a text about the term *techne* that does not significantly engage technology in terms of modern machines and tools. Aristotle's categorization in *Nicomachean Ethics* established *techne* as a form of knowledge and poiesis becomes making in relation to art practices.

Hannah Arendt, in *The Human Condition*, equates poiesis with fabrication. She notes that if the focus is on an object that remains, Plato makes use of fabrication to clarify ideas or *eidos* ("shape" or "form"). Arendt says, "It rested on experiences in

poiesis or fabrication.”<sup>35</sup> And it is distinct from praxis.<sup>36</sup> (These descriptions are noted with references to *Nicomachean Ethics*). Aristotle goes on to order the types of knowledge with *theoria*, contemplation being the highest valued, although connected to fabrication (*poiesis*) because the maker is led by the idea of the object’s form. And the idea involves contemplation.<sup>37</sup>

*Toward a theopoetics of architecture (rupturing Sacred Architect-ology)*<sup>38</sup>

Theopoetics commits to the deconstruction of totalizations that persist in language and tradition, including the traditions of architecture that center on Man as the measure for *good* architecture. This dissertation’s construction of a theopoetics of architecture relies on Keller’s description of theopoetics in “The Becoming of Theopoetics: A Brief, Incongruent History.”<sup>39</sup> My reading of Keller’s description of theopoiesis accommodates a conversation about material assemblies and reaches toward them. A theopoetics of architecture marks a “nodal” transformation in relation. Neither theopoetics nor architecture predetermines the other. Theopoetics of architecture is intended to simulate movement through a nodal change. Architecture and theology may

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<sup>35</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 142.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, 195.

<sup>37</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 301-302.

<sup>38</sup> There are growing calls to form a clearer discipline called architectology that would tie the loose threads of theory and criticism. I have added sacred as it would be a subdiscipline within a larger architectology as it is defined in Concha Diez-Pastor’s 2012 article “Architectology: Architectural Knowledge Construction. South African Journal of Art History, Vol 27. No 1. 2012. ISSN 0258-3542

<sup>39</sup> Catherine Keller, “The Becoming of Theopoetics: A Brief, Incongruent History,” in *Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibilities* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017).

be recognizable to each other at times; at other times, they may be misunderstood neighbors. I am dangerously anthropomorphizing and, therefore, misrepresenting the disciplines as if they are stable or monolithic. Still, the attempt to foster a spirit of poetic playfulness and experimentation might allow for creative meetings across seemingly distant disciplines.

My interest in bringing architecture into conversation with a theopoetics of conviviality and planetary hospitality<sup>40</sup> comes from a desire to acknowledge the struggle of holding a poetic cosmopolitan imagination in tension with the practice of creating, building, and constructing (*poiesis*) in the “real” world.<sup>41</sup> I gravitate toward architecture as much for its limitations and constraints as for its characteristic utopian tendencies. *Theopoetics of architecture* therefore names the impossibility and complexity of “practicing an unconditional, planetary hospitality in the world”<sup>42</sup> - in proximity to material conditions, among ordering systems. I am interested in connecting theo-ethical visions of world-making to ideas of material ordering within multivalent ecologies. Maneuvering in the limiting space of material constraints (such as buildings, infrastructures, and cities) to answer the religious call to love the neighbor/stranger/enemy as self requires more transdisciplinary dialogue than the category “sacred architecture” may initiate. Understanding the epistemological linkages between architecture and theopoetics requires a deeply intentional interdisciplinary

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40 Namsoon Kang, “Toward a Cosmopolitan Theology: Constructing Public Theology from the Future,” in Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera, *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2011.

41 Kang, *Cosmopolitan Theology*, 11.

42 *ibid.*, 17.



project. An interrogation of their overlaps or alignments, their neighborly-ness, may begin with a recognition of their shared affinities for the *poiesis*- the emergence or creation of some *thing*.<sup>43</sup> Through what *poetic* material-immaterial interminglings does architecture emerge? How is the *poetic* assembly constructed? Theopoetics of conviviality or "becoming with," delves into the intertwined trajectories of the biopolitics of care and security, architectures of confinement, debilitating environments, and the politics of affect.<sup>44</sup> This is all to reenvision "the problem of homelessness" through a transdisciplinary lens that critically engages the epistemologies and theologies that shape events of relationality.

## TRANSDISCIPLINARY

### *Disciplinary jurisdictions*

My specific entry point pertains to the effects of modern disciplinarity on the issue of homelessness. Homelessness predates Enlightenment scholastics, and rather than transforming homelessness fundamentally or looking at it as a social science specific field of study, it challenges any one field's claim to *know* it. The study of how humans interact with the built environment and, more specifically, the modern city or post-industrial urban environment, has been a point of critique for philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, geographers, economists, environmentalists, etc. The thinkers I engage in

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43 Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 2008, 9. In *The Craftsman*, Sennett comments, "Western civilization has had a deep-rooted trouble in making connections between head and hand, in recognizing and encouraging the impulse of craftsmanship."

44 Catherine Keller, Namsoon Kang, Sharon Betcher, Maya Rivera inform my understanding of conviviality's wider incarnational, material, and spatial implications.

this dissertation are variously transdisciplinary scholars. Many of the scholars are often associated with a single field of study. Still, beyond merely claiming a commitment to a field or a theory, those I engage with are rethinking from the ground up, posing questions that require a framework that recognizes the limits of their own disciplines. Working across disciplines is one way of honing that critical lens.

Writing within the field of philosophy of religion and theology, theopoetics provides the space to approach entangled processes that are not easily resolvable; they exist in tension and, at times, contradiction. However, theopoetics also resist closure and foundation. It allows for experimentation and possibility. I interpret theopoetics as methodologically open. It is not closed off to different voices or disciplines. It does not claim to be pure, nor does it seek a savior in either aesthetics or politics. It is not a-political, but neither is it sufficiently political. Theopoetics acknowledges its limitations and is therefore in touch with its apophatic side.

### *The Architecture of Sacred Architecture: Sacred Architecture as a Discipline*

The definition of sacred architecture is provisional and not intended to mark a limit or draw a rigid boundary around what can and should be considered sacred architecture. Rather, the definition seeks to clarify the contours of a discourse surrounding sacred architecture even as it extends beyond theology and philosophy, a pragmatic definition that reflects that “sacred architecture” most immediately refers to the buildings and structures that are communally recognized sites of worship, ritual, or liturgy. (Such as the annual award for sacred architecture from the American Institute of Architects).

Courses that introduce sacred architecture or religious architecture offered at architecture and design schools may expand the discussion to place and space, including landscape projects, memorials, and art installations; they most often begin with a central focus on churches, temples, mosques, and shrines. A brief search of current offerings returned a plethora of examples. For example, a course being offered in Spring 2023 at Harvard Graduate School of Design, titled “Making Sacred Space,” describes the class as follows:

This course addresses the current crisis in church design by an in depth consideration of the ideas, images, concepts, and legislation that inform the creation of sacred space. The aim of the course is to enable designers to become leaders in the controversy, to propose new solutions, and build better religious buildings.

For almost 2,000 years church commissions have been the largest, most prominent, and most artistically and [intellectually] challenging [commissions] that engage architects. No other commission poses equal demands for the realization of ideas in built form, and none draws on so rich a heritage of images and metaphors requiring visible shape. Recent projects by Rafael Moneo, Renzo Piano, SOM, and Richard Meier, among others, show this is still true today. Yet many recently-built churches are banal, generic or, in searching for novelty, ugly or weird. Others, while aesthetically or technologically admirable, function poorly and fail to meet the needs of the users.

Christian belief is not necessary in order to design a church, but knowledge of Christian culture and tradition, of the liturgy, and of what sacred space is and is not, is essential. In this course we approach Christianity as culture, not creed. Since in designing a church the expectations and needs of the client (both clerical and congregational users) are paramount, these will be explored in depth. Two of the programmatic requirements – that the church be beautiful and that it inspire wonder – will receive particular attention as aspects for which the designer is especially, perhaps solely, responsible. This course considers the conceptual, theoretical, and aesthetic foundations of contemporary church design and reviews specific examples of how those ideas can be

and have been implemented through lectures, readings, discussions and an individual design project.<sup>45</sup>

And a course offered at Catholic Distance University, “Theology of Sacred Architecture,” introduces the history, theology, and symbolism of Catholic sacred architecture, focusing on how its development has affected the shape, configuration, and use of the Catholic Church throughout various architectural styles and eras. The course’s website says, “The class will trace the Church’s development from Pagan and Old Testament ideas of sacred architecture through the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Counter-Reformation and Vatican II.”<sup>46</sup> Another example is from a book published by Yale School of Architecture. The book’s publishing website writes, “*Constructing the Ineffable* is the first book to examine this topic across continents and from the perspective of multiple faiths, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Baha’i. It addresses how sacred buildings such as churches, mosques, synagogues, and memorials are viewed in the context of contemporary architecture and religious practice.”<sup>47</sup> Contemporary studies of sacred architecture continue to pursue creative avenues of research, yet these studies often draw discernible, albeit fluid, contours around the conceptual modifier “sacred.” However, “architecture” absent this modifier disregards theological and religious content, Christian ethics, or philosophies of religion. While spirituality and transcendence are not alien to architecture, it is not tied to rituals, liturgy, and matters of faith (one might argue

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<sup>45</sup> Harvard GSD, “Making Sacred Space,” Accessed Dec. 2022, <https://www.gsd.harvard.edu/course/making-sacred-space-spring-2023/>.

<sup>46</sup> Catholic Distance University, Accessed Dec. 2022, <https://cdu.edu/theology-of-sacred-architecture-to-be-offered-in-fall-ii-term/>.

<sup>47</sup> *Constructing the Ineffable*, Yale School of Architecture, <https://www.architecture.yale.edu/publications/79-constructing-the-ineffable-contemporary-sacred-architecture>

light holds a “sacred” position in non-religious architecture, for example. Louis Kahn’s designs). The gap between “sacred” and “architecture,” to me, remains both determined and elusive, resembling two sides of the same epistemological coin. Theology has resources for deconstructing the conceptual category of the sacred but struggles with deconstructing architecture. Architecture has internal sources for deconstructing simple definitions of “architecture” but is less capable, or concerned, with nuancing sacredness (holiness, spirituality, religion, or divinity). In this dissertation, theopoetics serves as a tool to (re)discover the relationship between two fields that have (divergently) contemplated the relationship between making/creating and dwelling together.<sup>48</sup>

## SACRED ARCHITECTURE

### *Sacred Architecture as a disciplinary marker*

The definition of sacred architecture is provisional and not intended to mark a limit or draw a rigid boundary around what can and should be considered sacred architecture. Rather, my reference to the sacred in relation to architecture seeks to clarify the contours of the secular discourses on sacred architecture. A pragmatic definition reflects that “sacred architecture” most immediately refers to the buildings and structures that are sites of communally recognized sites of worship, ritual, or liturgy.

For example, the annual award for sacred architecture given by the American Institute of Architects almost exclusively awards buildings that are worship sites for a “major world religion” – the Abrahamic religions are the most decorated recipients of

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<sup>48</sup> Indra Kagis McEwen, in *Socrates’ Ancestor: An Essay on Architectural Beginnings*, architecture, or making, and religion were not practiced separately prior to arrival of philosophy in ancient Greece. Ewan in *Socrates’ Ancestor: An Essay on Architectural Beginnings*. MIT Press, 1993.

awards for sacred architecture. Academic courses on sacred architecture, or religious architecture, offered at architecture and design schools share a similar starting point or central focus - churches, temples, mosques, and shrines.

In many texts on sacred architecture, the definition of sacred follows an anthropological definition of the sacred often found in architecture history and religious studies. Reference to the sacred does not necessarily incorporate the expansive and multiple understanding of the sacred found in diverse theological discussions. In this project, I will attempt to clarify the shifting definitions of the sacred between my conversation partners.

For example, in his essay in *Transcending Architecture*, Thomas Barrie, even in his attempt to provide an interdisciplinary dialogue between religion and architecture, is hampered by his reliance on Vitruvius,<sup>49</sup> ancient cosmological, hierarchical ordering, which persists in definitions of sacred architecture.<sup>50</sup> The histories of religion and architecture are intertwined in ancient myths and cosmologies. Vitruvius, the “founder” of architecture, was a first-century BCE Roman architect and author of the 10 volume *De architectura*, in which he described the principles of architecture in terms of reflecting the cosmic order of the universe in the temples and civic buildings. First-century Greco-

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<sup>49</sup> The histories of religion and architecture are intertwined in ancient myths and cosmologies. Vitruvius, the “founder” of architecture, was a first-century BCE Roman architect and author of the 10 volume *De architectura*, in which he described the principles of architecture in terms of reflecting the cosmic order of the universe in the temples and civic buildings. First-century Greco-Roman architecture marked one’s position and place in the world.

<sup>50</sup> In “The Domestic and the Numinous in Sacred Architecture,” Barrie concludes his essay with a section on the “primitive hut” in which he explores various mythologies and philosophies that make “this simple dwelling” characterized by its “maternal hearth” as our ontological home in the world. Sacred architecture often participates in the retelling of architecture’s history in the participation of a hierarchical ordering civilization that remains at the level of abstraction.

Roman architecture marked one's position and place in the world. As Barrie concludes, "Home in all of these contexts is a sacred realm, which comprises broader ontological territories that transcend the common assignation of home to the secular."<sup>51</sup> I do not discount the ontological importance of dwelling. However, Heideggerian existential phenomenology has become a central feature of modern definitions of the sacred in architectural history and theory. Theories that describe marking sites and making an ontological home in the world often fail to critique how marking space and naming places supported European colonial projects. When looking at a transdisciplinary dialogue between theopoetics and architecture, I suggest bracketing the definitions of sacred architecture<sup>52</sup> that rely too exclusively on church representations. It is necessary to move beyond the generalized categories of church, sanctuary, and home to witness and provide language and support to those who experience the rupture of all of these places.

In this dissertation, the points of contact between disciplines are key concerns of the project. As you travel along the edge of different disciplines, the felt walls and discursive maneuvering reverberate to mark the contours of inclusion and exclusion that translate into the inclusion or exclusion of the political vectors of decision-making. It is also a question of the site of intervention. Much of my focus in response to calls for social justice concerns the instrumentalization and experience of the built environment and how it ties together who or what counts as human with where and how bodies are located in space.

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<sup>51</sup> Thomas Barrie, "The Domestic and the Numinous," 39.

<sup>52</sup> Rowan Wilken, "The critical reception of Christian Norberg-Schulz's writings on Heidegger and place," 2013. *Architectural Theory Review*. 18:3, 340-355. <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.3/375447>.

As my dissertation seeks to develop a conversation between theopoetics and architecture, the chapters address different aspects of architecture to demonstrate the multiple points of “neighborly” contact with the philosophy of religion and theology. I aim to multiply these interconnections rather than limit a potential dialogue with unmoving definitions. Multiple architects and their diverse projects will enter to address architecture as a concept and a practice. The chapters are arranged by theme and scale to set creative limits for thinking about what *conviviality in proximity* might be from multiple perspectives. Significant architectural ideas I explore will constitute and align with my chapters’ thematic ambitions: ordering, sociospatial justice, biopolitics, tectonic arrays, and scale.

## **ORDERING & SCALES**

### *Material Ordering Systems at Different Scales of Relationality*

Architecture is a practice of ordering in a material field of potentiality. It entails multiple interrelated processes for constructing (and deconstructing) new possibilities (negative and positive) within the limitations of sites, materials, policies, and economies. The material assemblies, or assemblages, which bind buildings to place and bind parts to form a whole are primarily absent in space and place theory. Ordering systems are characteristic of architecture. However, to avoid deploying a rigid, totalizing order all too readily “set in concrete,” I will encourage other ways of conceptualizing architectural arrangements that are not limited to binding as immobilization.

On the surface, order antagonizes discourses that resist fixity and insist on liberating fluidity, change, and untamable chaos. For example, continental philosophies of religion adopt motile spatial concepts more readily than material constructs, ordered



arrangements, and assembly processes. Considering architectural assemblies of order, including the physical forces that participate in generating materials, is also relevant. The texts on sacred architecture largely fail to account for the building's material and tectonic processes.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, my approach to architecture focuses on tectonic assemblies and forces as a counterweight to interpretations centered on image, text, and symbolism.

The physical forces at play in architecture, such as gravity, tension, torque, shear stress, and friction, become excluded from theologies and philosophies of space. I want to embrace the tension between the fluidity typically attributed to poetics and the fixity often claimed by architectural practice - not to stage a battle that leads to competition between dualistic poles but to create transdisciplinary folds of order and chaos. Catherine Keller's elaboration of order at the edge of chaos - with affinities of a Joycean *chaosmos*<sup>54</sup> - will be indispensable for articulating theopoetics of architecture. Ordering might also spark ways of participating in the unique becomings that happen when solidities in flux meet in new combinations to create the conditions for creative interactions.

Architecture typically functions at the scale of the building and sometimes at the scale of the city, which then begins to overlap with urban planning. Nevertheless, I do not want to lose the enfolded nonhuman cosmos amid discussing the city's architecture. I

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<sup>53</sup> The tectonic, in architecture's discourses, refers to methods of making, joining, arranging material and the consequent expressive capabilities of structural arrays. Architectural theorist and historian Kenneth Frampton develops theories of architecture that focus on practices of material assembly. Emphasizing the tectonic (joining or aggregations of parts to whole) and stereotomic (cutting, as in mass or of stone or earth) processes of creating building may offer a correction to the postmodern focus on textual, semiotic, and symbolic approaches to architecture.

<sup>54</sup> Catherine Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003). Essential to my arguments concerning order are the moments where Keller shows order is not the antithesis to creativity, rather order and chaos are entangled parts of the very potentiality of becoming.

resist reducing the polis to the *mere* structure of ordering human others. The cosmopolitan planetary hospitality I put forward benefits from an approach to cosmopolitanism that situates the city (and I assume its component architectures) at an ecological scale of conviviality. Keller describes an entangled cosmos-polis in “The Cosmopolitan Body of Christ. Postcoloniality and Process Cosmology: A View from Bogotá.”<sup>55</sup> In this essay, Keller recognizes that the folding of the cosmos into polis provokes a serious consideration of the implications of cosmopolitanism *without* cosmos when she asks, “When the nonhuman alterity is eclipsed – the nonhuman that surrounds us and that composes us in our complex animality and our stardust, our matter, our mattering – what sort of humanity remains? A posthumanity describable less by its animate embodiment than by its info-techno-global economics?”<sup>56</sup> Architecture participates at a unique intersection of scale and matter in the human-nonhuman ecology of the city. Cosmopolitics meets Whiteheadian thought in the work of Keller elaborates a field of conviviality that resists universalization and building from above. Rather, she suggests enfolding the scale of the cosmos at the scale of grounded, earthly architecture - in a “planetary poetics in process - a *terrapoiesis*.”<sup>57</sup>

I recognize shifting scalar affinities between Keller’s cosmopolitanism and architect Andrés Jaque’s approach to architecture. In *Superpowers of Scale*, Jaque writes,

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<sup>55</sup> Catherine Keller, “The Cosmopolitan Body of Christ. Postcoloniality and Process Cosmology: A View from Bogotá,” in *Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2017.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, 166.

<sup>57</sup> Keller, “The Becoming of Theopoetics,” 117. Keller writes, “As to God, then, it is a matter not of believing but of making, materializing God. Doing God. Do the truth, it will set you free. To become God as doing God - doing the prophetic justice, the love thing.”

“Architecture’s engagement with the entanglement of heterogeneous multitudes makes it a momentous potential contributor to the production of the societal.”<sup>58</sup> Jaque propels architecture into the vast networks of material processes that do not separate the societal from the material. His vision of the practice of architecture provokes a new ecological vision for articulating architecture that resonates with other Deleuze-informed approaches to architecture. The generational influence of Heidegger’s existential phenomenology of dwelling on religious architecture history stalls from limited creative potential. Deleuzian rhizomatic approaches to dwelling might open paths for fresh architectural definitions of sacred architecture. Architects’ roles and professions are currently in flux. This instability suggests the need for a new theopoetic language that unlocks the domestication of sanctum from restrictive categorical linkages to the hearth, home,<sup>59</sup> and church. I am not suggesting that sacred architecture, such as temples, mosques, and shrines, be jettisoned and left to its past myths. That disposal would recapitulate a teleological civilizing project that puts “primitive architecture”<sup>60</sup> in the distant past and at the bottom of the development of architecture’s civilizing hierarchy. Instead, I suggest adding notions of architecture and theology that might speak to an extended field of sanctums at the multiple scales of chaosmos. Combined with the cosmopolitanism-to-come born in

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<sup>58</sup> Andrés Jaque, *Superpowers of Scale*, 17.

<sup>59</sup> I am concerned with the problematic raced and gendered descriptions of sacred architecture and sacred space that get uncritically retold. A description of the home as a sacred space limits the possible ways of talking about sacred architecture in ways that are in dialogue with people experiencing homelessness.

<sup>60</sup> The majority of texts that study sacred architecture relies on the traditional pyramidal categories of architectural history that position classical Greek and Roman architecture at the pinnacle and “primitive” and indigenous architecture at the bottom, see R Kevin Seasoltz, *A Sense of the Sacred: Theological Foundations of Sacred Architecture and Art* (New York: Continuum, 2005).

radical hospitality, sacred architecture might find new articulations at the threshold where cosmopolitan theopoetics meets a theopoetics of architecture.

### *Cosmic and Colonial Ordering*

Geography, ratios, proportions, cardinal directions, and celestial bodies were fundamental to origin myths and their associated architectural artifacts. In the Renaissance, treatises like Vitruvius' gained new prominence, emphasizing symmetry, ratios and mathematical archetypes reflecting classical ideals of order. Since architect Leon Battista Alberti revived Vitruvian principles, the significance of order and structure was reflected not just in sacred sites but across building typologies of various scales.

However, European colonial regimes promoted perspectives denigrating non-Western architectures as "primitive". By characterizing attributes of so-called primitive design, insights emerge into civilizing norms colonization aimed to impose. Hierarchical "cosmic orderings" (Gk. *kosmos*, orderly arrangement) established in architectural taxonomies rely on dichotomizing traditions. The types of hierarchical cosmic ordering reflected in architectural history, typified in the taxonomies of sacred architecture founded upon primitive and civilized hierarchies, may require the decolonization of the cosmos itself. Ultimately, decolonizing entrenched assumptions requires re-examining mythologies beyond the colonial lens and reconsidering design systems' diverse spiritual origins and functions. The following chapters continue interrogating methods of instilling hierarchical evaluations of architectures and their implications.

## **BIOPOLITICS OF ARCHITECTURE, CARE, AND CONFINEMENT**

Governmentality, in Michel Foucault's sense, utilizes architecture for its ability to influence, suggestively and coercively, behavior based on values and morality.

Functionalists, constructivists, and behaviorists try to deploy built structures, containers, and boundaries (often with benevolent intent) to change a person's behavior, a form of psychological conversion intending to create a "healthy" person. Foucault provides a helpful set of conceptual tools to analyze the discursive formations that create a gravitational center around debates about safety, health, race, and public space orbit. He hints at tactics for responding to the shifting forms of governmentality that confine or control "social problems."

I am interested in investigating how built structures and surrounding spaces both inform social categories and how proximity to objects and other bodies determines the *status of a neighbor*. Discourses that construct the "status" of neighbors, from the U. S. immigration policy to NGO definitions of homelessness, I argue, largely determine the politics of recognition; who or what counts as a neighbor, as a component of the social, overly determines imagined avenues for practicing justice. I argue for more neighbor-facing social justice frameworks that speak to the historically racist, ableist, and sexist politics and economics that participate in the construction of the built environment - referred to in my dissertation as sociospatial justice.<sup>61</sup>

Architecture is a crucial variable of circulation, motion, and access politics.

Nearness that incorporates architectural propinquity - neighborliness as the coordination

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<sup>61</sup> When there is a social or population "problem" to be solved, the solution, very often, is *to build*. "Liberation" is one of the five main organizing themes in the current MoMA exhibition "Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America." The associated catalog essay which introduces the liberation theme opens with a question by architect Roberta Washington, "Architects are taught to think about architecture in terms of beauty and utility. But should architecture — and the profession itself — also be judged by how it supports or diminishes social justice? In one mode, this dissertation attempts to respond to this question from a transdisciplinary perspective. Each chapter explores social-spatial justice frameworks that bridge theology, philosophy, and architecture to critique discursive performance and institutional power that mark bodies as being either in- or out-of-place.

of flows of proximity - extends near-dwelling to consider the processes that create the potential and probability of interaction and exchange. For architect and urban critic Michael Sorkin, “Propinquity – neighborliness – is the ground and problem of democracy. . . . City politics is deeply inscribed in questions of propinquity and access, in the legibility and tractability of routines of circulation and contact: the *currency* of propinquity is exchange, the most vital measure of the city’s intensity.”<sup>62</sup> The exchange of potential neighbors and the intensities of neighborliness participate in the structured chaos of human and nonhuman architectures.

I suggest looking closer at how architecture aggregates the power to act on bodies. Sociospatial justice frameworks uncover the hidden ways architecture influences the capacities for conviviality and hospitality through its ability to enable or to resist mobility and proximity - the mechanisms that produce architectures of incarceration and quarantine. Combined with an analysis of the biopolitics<sup>63</sup> of population, a sociospatial justice lens that emerges from antiracist and anti-ableist design justice frameworks help to name the practices of criminalization and devaluation of space and their proximate bodies.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Michael Sorkin, *Giving Ground: The Politics of Propinquity*, Verso, 1999, 2. Sorkin declares, “Rules of accessibility form criteria for determining who may go where and when. As such, these rights of way - which grant temporary permission to use private or public property for passage - structure a primal rite of giving ground and can thus serve us here as a concrete, that is, physical, exemplum of the deference to one’s neighbor that urban existence daily demands.”

<sup>63</sup> Biopolitics of architecture will unfold the history of population categorization and management during the nineteenth century. Michel Foucault studies in *The Birth of the Clinic* and *History of Madness* are both reflected in his engagement with Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon.

<sup>64</sup> For example, the language of “unaccompanied minors at the border” specifically avoids responsibility for the practices of confinement and retraumatization of architecturally structured isolation. Currently, there is ongoing debate in Boston to “place” homeless individuals in empty spaces in the state correctional facility. How would a focus on architecture’s action on bodies rather than the predetermined labels and intentions of governmentality add to a social justice, theoethical lens?

## INTERLUDES AS TRANSDISCIPLINARY PRAXIS

The events of Operation Clean Sweep (OCS) are difficult to interpret (see Interlude 4) The themes I explore in this dissertation are an attempt to analyze the field of an event through a spatial lens and borrowing some of the design tools familiar to architects and designers. Grounding the project in the OCS event highlights the shortcomings of approaching these issues from a singular disciplinary viewpoint. Interdisciplinarity adds points of view, but it can be a multiplication of the logic of disciplinarity when a discipline's "area of focus" or "professional ethics" is defined by professions and disciplinary methodologies. Transdisciplinarity attempts to name the potential for emergent creativity when disciplinary boundaries are blurred and disciplines affect one another amid dialogue. What emerged in the process of marking the events of OCS as a site of investigation were jurisdictions describing not only juridical geographies but also something akin to jurisdictions existing in the realm of professional and disciplinary territories. For example, disciplinary and professional markers erect discursive walls in informal and formal policy making. These socially constructed walls are inherent framers of *dispositifs* (Foucault)—apparatuses of visibility, utterance, force, and subjectivity (Foucault).<sup>65</sup> The result becomes invisible dynamic fields of advancement and cession of decision-making.

In this transdisciplinary project, the disciplinary points of contact are key concerns. As you travel along the edge of different disciplines, the felt walls and

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<sup>65</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "What is a Dispositif?," 1992. <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/gilles-deleuze-what-is-a-dispositif>

discursive maneuvering reverberate to mark the contours of inclusion and exclusion that translate into the inclusion or exclusion of the political vectors of decision making.

The relationships between theory and practice are far more partial and fragmentary. on one side, a theory is always local and related to a limited field, and it is applied in another sphere, more or less distant from it. The relationship which holds in the application of a theory is never one of resemblance. Moreover, from the moment a theory moves into its proper domain, it begins to encounter obstacles, walls, and blockages which require its relay by another type of discourse (it is through this other discourse that it eventually passes to a different domain). Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall.<sup>66</sup>

It is not a coincidence that this discussion between Foucault and Deleuze about theory and practice resonates with my concerns as to public discussions surrounding homelessness. The movements between discourses, or *dispositifs*, create a crisis of translation, and the power to decide the terms of engagement is rarely shared. My insistence on an interdisciplinary approach, one of the goals being to show the impossibility of a politically neutral disciplinary/professional meeting, is to argue for thinking about homelessness less as a concrete thing and more as a set of relations shaped by a collision of multiple assemblages to create invisible and visible outcomes that may give hints that something happened but does not count as the representation of any single thing. I have experienced feeling the discursive walls that shape conversations with groups and individuals who are involved in “the city’s” response to a crisis involving people without permanent and secure housing: Boston Public Health, Boston Emergency Services, Mass and Cass Task Force, Mayor’s Office of New Urban Mechanics, community outreach police officers, multiple social workers working in Boston area

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<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*



programs, religious leaders working at Faith-Based Programs for outreach and homeless services, and medical staff working at the organization Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program.<sup>67</sup> In a discussion between Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, published as “Intellectuals and Power, Deleuze interprets Foucault’s activism as a concrete example of the discursive relays and walls Foucault theorized. Deleuze says,

For example, your [Foucault’s] work began in the theoretical analysis of the context of confinement, specifically with respect to the psychiatric asylum within a capitalist society in the nineteenth century. Then you became aware of the necessity for confined individuals to speak for themselves, to create a relay (it’s possible, on the contrary, that your function was already that of a relay in relation to them); and this group is found in prisons -- these individuals are imprisoned. It was on this basis that you organized the information group for prisons (G.I.P.)(1), the object being to create conditions that permit the prisoners themselves to speak.<sup>68</sup>

It is also a question of the site of intervention. Much of my focus in response to calls for social justice concerns the instrumentalization and experience of the built environment and how it ties together who or what is human with where and how bodies are located in space. Historically, the organization of buildings, streets, and cities reflected the locally operative cosmologies and religions. The divine order set out by a master designer has shaped the organization of the city. Values shape what is common, what is property, how humans are linked ontologically to location and land, domicile, and societal responses to crime, work, and poverty.

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<sup>67</sup> Where and are the individuals who are directly affected represented? That is one of the guiding critical questions that can help mark the invisible boundaries surrounding decision making.

Deleuze credited Foucault with seeking to develop “relays” or techniques for “piercing the walls” of expertise and authority to speak for or behalf of others.

<sup>68</sup> Foucault and Deleuze, “Intellectuals and Power,” 1972. The English transcript first appeared in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: selected essays and interviews by Michel Foucault*, edited by Donald F. Bouchard.

## **INTERLUDES: ARCHITECTURE'S INTERVENTION**

The tools of architects and spatial designers, combined with conceptual frameworks from other disciplines, help to locate, understand, and contextualize the forces at play in the city as a precursor to problem solving. Through critical inquiry into the sociocultural contexts that characterize the spatial narratives of Mass and Cass, this work imagines its audience reaching beyond the academy to include community knowledge holders, decision makers, and collaborators. For example, I reviewed a study by MASS Design Group, The Boston Architectural College, and the Rhode Island School of Design and discussed the proposed architectural interventions.

## **CHAPTER OVERVIEWS**

Chapter 2, “Decolonizing and Disordering (Sacred) Architecture & The Logic of the Master (Arche) - Builder (Tekton),” critically examines how sacred architecture has often been conceptualized and valued without fully acknowledging the socio-political and economic factors underlying its construction. This includes the erasure of violent histories of slavery and settler colonialism and the exploitation of marginalized communities in the process of building these sacred spaces. Through various theoretical lenses, including the works of architectural historian Mabel O. Wilson and theologian J. Kameron Carter, I argue for a reevaluation of sacred architecture that questions the stability and origin myths of such structures and consider alternative narratives that challenge the conventional definitions of sacredness in relation to architecture.

Chapter 3, “Panopticism, Debility, and Pastoral Power: Architectures of Care, Confinement, and Correction,” argues that biopolitical technologies are materialized through architectures that operate on and through particular bodies - as instruments of

governmentality. Precarity becomes unequally distributed when decisions are made for or on behalf of “those in the next room,” and architectural arrangements participate in variable affective privileges that are entangled in racist, classist, and ableist structures. The chapter elaborates on how constructivist and behaviorist models tend to operationalize built environments to “fix” abnormalities and explores how buildings and barriers participate in the constitution of what Foucault might call the biopolitics of architecture that contain, coerce, convert, and choreograph collections of bodies as populations.

Chapter 4, “Dwelling-Near: Proximities and Friction at Home,” questions how the decisions made on behalf of those “in the next room” are justified by the assumed ability to recognize the person or community that one targets as the object of either care or security. The affective force of external decision-making marks the surface of bodies and - particularly in this dissertation - the social constitution of bodies. The chapter argues for a reclamation of trust in one's capabilities to identify felt realities that exist, in entangled ways, between the body, material world, and institutional politics. And, in doing so, aims to offer a way for people to articulate these experiences without wrongly becoming targets of blame or perpetuating discomfort. It explores how Sara Ahmed's conceptualization of orientation in *Queer Phenomenology* provides language to describe how objects and architectures participate in relationality at the scale of the body, providing critical queer paths for transdisciplinary dialogue between fields interested in affect theory and new materialism. The chapter transitions from Foucault's description of the biopolitical relationship between buildings and bodies to explore how institutional racism embedded in the education, practice, and histories of architecture influences

perceptions of what is shared or belongs to the public sphere. It examines how the presence or absence of bodies marked as out-of-place by racism, ableism, and classism affects the conditions that make the love of neighbor possible by exacerbating experiences of marginalization and exclusion through boundaries and thresholds that encode power relations.

Chapter 5, “Material Ecologies of Agency,” explains that scales of ordering are materially and ontologically negotiated within broader ecologies. The chapter follows architectural approaches that embrace the ecologies of material forces and acknowledge their immense consequences on planetary processes. Andrés Jaque’s expansion of architectural objecthood creates new opportunities for transdisciplinary dialogue between process philosophies and theologies and architecture informed by material practices and processes.

The concluding chapter, “Toward a Theopoetic Praxis of Architecture,” reassembles definitions of architecture and conviviality expanded across earlier chapters to include the politics and economics bounded by the built environment. Exploring an approach responsive to theopoetics (theo-poiesis), which speaks to the prophetic call of making and building possibilities for planetary hospitality, aligning with Keller’s essential conceptualization of theopoetics for constructing conviviality in proximity. Transdisciplinary dialogue between architecture and religion necessitates new approaches beyond “sacred architecture” to accommodate sensory experience and material ecologies, engaging contemporary architects and theorists to expand conceptualizations of building as arrangements of non-static material assemblages, fields, and affects blurring distinctions between building-object and human-subject. Finally, theopoetics of

architecture becomes an attempt to think alongside sacred architecture from a different entry point, naming where ideal theopoetic hospitality for the neighbor meets material-mediated, proximal location's force and friction in space-time—imagining the tension between theological poetics and architectural practices as a marker responding to Namsoon Kang's prophetic call of living between the world-as-it-is and the world-as-it-ought-to be.

## CONCLUSION

My turn to architecture's material construction attempts to disrupt apolitical sentimentality for neighbors. Namsoon Kang's call for a cosmopolitan orientation that reconstitutes neighbor love as conviviality-to-come might be extended by elaborating conviviality amongst architecture's political and economic entanglements. As Kang warns, "When a religious teaching such as neighbor-love-as-self-love becomes *depoliticized* by locating its implication outside the human reality, it loses its public relevance and ends up being just a romanticized cliché-statement. Religion is about hospitality and responsibility, and neighbor-enemy-love-as-self-love in a Christian term that requires one to turn a new gaze onto others - a *cosmopolitan gaze*."<sup>69</sup> The cosmopolitan gaze described here twins love and justice in ways that recognize the multiplicities of solidarity. The loss of difference and justice amidst solidarity and love risks separating neighbors into split constituencies: those pathologized as problems and those reified as problem solvers.

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<sup>69</sup> Namsoon Kang, *Cosmopolitan Theology: Reconstituting Planetary Hospitality, Neighbor-Love, and Solidarity in an Uneven World* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2013), 17.

The authors I have chosen as conversation partners help me to explore how our complex relationships to housing, home, and property, specifically in the United States, complicate, if not elide, “neighborly” intentions. For example, when our identities are molded and marked by fields of police surveillance, spectacle, and stigma that are inextricably characterized by conditions of housing, how do we navigate conviviality in light of its construction as a consequence of conditional shelter?

I see this dissertation as informing my work in current discourses about equitable rights to public space, the role of the built environment in systems of access and exclusion, and the scholar’s responsibility to render invisible inequities more visible and, hopefully, actors more accountable. I aim to develop critical approaches to the sociospatial systems of exclusion, dislocation, and surveillance, made operative through programs focused on “punishment” or “treatment.” By connecting notions of dignified space to the characteristics of sacred spaces, safe spaces, refuge cities, and sanctuaries, I pursue avenues for advocacy to build more dignified and respectful spaces for unsheltered people to find allied language and communities. My dissertation will elaborate on my current teaching and research projects in critical design at the Boston Architectural College. I seek to develop a methodology for the increased visualization and consequent transformation of geographies of inequity. The goals include humanizing the experiences of homelessness, highlighting the challenges of living with one another, and making the conceptual entanglement of the housed and the unhoused more visible and thereby registerable in praxis - aided by the tools of architectural and geographic visualizations. It will do this by mapping invisible power relations in the city and contesting dominant, stigmatizing narratives by weaving critical theory into the

representational tools and strategies embedded within the conventions of design practices.

The dissertation chapters can be roughly described as each centering on a particular aspect of architecture that participates in the contingency of neighborly relationalities. The possibilities and foreclosures, proximities, and distances between neighbors express different textures and experiences of architecture. The negotiation of proximity and distance may be examined at various scales of order: at the scale of bodies, at the scale of populations, at the scale of institutions, and the scale of ecologies.

I position my work at the intersections of disciplines to remain sensitive to how ideas move and mutate between contexts, or how material artifacts and ideological constraints complicate their affiliated practices. The speculative articulation of theopoetics' and architecture's collisions may be generative to those who find creative tensions between an ethical singularity and ecologies of multiplicity. Those interested in relational philosophies and theologies, political theologies, and justice movements in architecture may be the most readily apparent conversation partners for the topics included.

### *Theopoetics of Architecture Futures*

But even in critical pieces such as Kenneth Frampton's critique of contemporary production, he concludes his essay arguing architecture, rather than becoming degraded by the industries of media and production, must provide for the desire for a reprieve from the "agitations of the present moment."<sup>70</sup> He imagines "an architecture that returns us,

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70 Frampton, "Reflections on the Autonomy of Architecture," 26.

through the experience of the subject, to that brief illusive moment touched on by Baudelaire, to that instant evoked by the words *luxe, calme, et volupté*.”<sup>71</sup> Utopianism is as much a part of architecture's story as it is to religion and socio-political idealism. The task is to explore the tension between the poetic and the political, between the dream and the reality, creating and critiquing.

A theopoetics of architecture should not be read as antagonistic to historical studies in sacred architecture or theologies of sacred architecture. The questions I ask in the space I am naming a theopoetics of architecture could be read along with these projects. I seek to explore a more affective or affectful architecture to read alongside these other projects. I am inviting conversations across disciplines that might engage in a different way than responding to some of the terms and categories embedded in religious architecture that centers on form, vision, and symbol in buildings.

How might the questions and concerns coming from the linguistic fields of theology, in its queer feminist antiracist liberative modes, and philosophies of religion experimentally and constructively intermingle with recent developments in the quickly evolving fields of design and architecture, such as trauma-informed design (which was recently marked as a widely enough accepted category to justice the newly formed Trauma Informed Design Society) forensic architecture, or architectures as a medium? Or justice in the built environment, design justice, socio-spatial justice. Or how to reflect on defensive architecture and hostile architecture. How to create new entry points into the relationship between the human and property.

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71 *ibid.*, 26.



I am seeking opportunities for theology to engage with emerging practices and fields of architecture that consider architecture beyond the building or the built form. For example, creating pathways that open clearer paths to dialogue with the work of Keller Easterling, Sean Lally, Andre Jaque, David Gissen, and Eyal Weizman. Practices that consider affects, energies, and assemblages that transgress the boundaries between material and immaterial, human and nonhuman.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DECOLONIZING (SACRED) ARCHITECTURE & DISORDERING THE LOGIC OF THE MASTER (ARCHE) - BUILDER (TEKTON)

I consequently ask myself how,  
before the separation between theory and practice, between thinking and architecture,  
a way of thinking linked to the architectural event could have existed.<sup>1</sup>

– Jacques Derrida, “Architecture Where Desire May Live”

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to develop a decolonizing framework for understanding the dialectic between the poetic and the material in architectural formations. It analyzes how philosophical and theological ideas have shaped prevailing definitions of "sacred architecture" as a discipline, often in ways that obscure or erase the lived experiences beyond buildings' symbolic meanings. Moreover, because the traditional ways in which architecture and sacred architecture have been studied rely on Eurocentric frameworks that obscure counter histories, it is necessary to decolonize these disciplines through alternative conceptual lenses.

In this chapter, I use the term "the architect" to refer to the ideal humanist architect who is viewed as a master builder, assembler, and orderer. Philosophically, the

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Architecture Where Desire May Live" in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (1992) interview with Eva Meyer (architect and theorist, architecture firm Raumlabor in Berlin), 319. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, and David Carlson, eds, *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (London: Routledge, 2016).

historical development of the master builder goes back to antiquity, but I limit the scope to Enlightenment and modern periods. In the context of the European Enlightenment, the architect takes on specific qualities, gifts, and virtues. “The architect” is more than a historical figure, such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Henry Latrobe, but stands for the representational embodiment of Enlightenment humanist ideals. This idealized figure is seen as a "cultivated man" of taste and an "original genius," highlighting the tension between a person who designs architecture and the people who labor to make buildings. According to Enlightenment scholasticism, which is the starting point for architecture and art history’s aesthetic tastes, Architecture is autonomous and possesses desirable qualities. To rise above the status of a common builder and become a *master builder*, an architect must possess qualities that go beyond the “mere” act of building.

Can a church, chapel, or temple be adequately described, categorized, and interpreted as "sacred architecture" while simultaneously erasing the building's (material, social, and historical) processes of assembly, including economic, political, and cultural factors? In theological terms, can a church be consecrated as sacred while ignoring the violent processes of assembly that brought it into being? One way to circumvent these questions would be to make anthropocentrically transcendent claims about the church, emphasizing a metaphysical hierarchical divide by stressing that the church is not just the building but something more, something that cannot be grounded. The theological affirmation of sacred structures, rooms, and offices can harm those who experience spaces and material assemblies in ways that deviate from the dominant narrative informed by traditions of sacredness attached to a structure.

My argument for a theopoetics of architecture is based on the idea that we must consider both the poetics and the materiality of a building without creating a hierarchy or separation between them. While linguistic specificity is helpful for analysis, it potentially, and regrettably, implies an ontological separation. Drawing on the process theology of Catherine Keller, I argue that we must embrace the idea of "becoming" and "intercarnation"<sup>2</sup> to fully appreciate the complex interplay between the sacred and profane (ante-sacred) in the creation of sacred architecture. Rather than seeking a taxonomy of sacred buildings, I am interested in exploring the multiplicities that rupture dominant definitions of the sacred concerning architecture. Only so one might create alternative practices and counter-narratives that challenge the limiting of notions of the sacred to its material and social assemblies.

A theopoetic approach invites the possibility of fracture and transformation beyond traditional frameworks of sacred architecture, which include the architect who orders and ontotheological sacred ordering. I turn to the work of several scholars for insights into considering architecture beyond its traditional or conventional descriptions. Zakkiyah Iman Jackson's work shows how blackness destabilizes the concept of the human, architectural historian Mabel O. Wilson's approach to architecture history and its entangled histories of building American ideals of freedom with the labor of chattel slavery and settler colonialism persists in the present discussion. J. Kameron Carter's "Black Malpractice: A Poetics of the Sacred" provides a way of disrupting stable notions

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<sup>2</sup> Catherine Keller, *Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017).

of the sacred.<sup>3</sup> The logics of originality, mastery, and stability demonstrated in architecture participate in the building process. To decolonize sacred architecture, I suggest examining how ideals are transmitted through materials, and the ways in which architecture can also be a tool for rupturing traditional foundations and creating new possibilities.

This chapter raises questions about the stability and porosity of sacred architecture, both physically and conceptually. How is it that proclamations of social justice and anti-racism coexist with, but apart from, a renovation project that reclaims the originality of a structure that relied and still relies on the accumulation of property and materials over time, without disrupting the church's foundational narrative? Wilson's essay provides a methodological guide for explaining the mechanisms that allow a structure to rise and remain stable, not in spite of, but in pursuit of virtues such as freedom, liberty, and justice, achievable through the “right” pedagogies.<sup>4</sup>

I will in this chapter explore the relationship between architecture and the sacred with a particular focus on the Enlightenment period. I argue that the view of architecture's relevance to philosophies and theologies of religion is limited by turns to sacred architecture, as an established discipline that relies on architectural history rooted in European epistemologies. Defining architecture's relationship to theology solely in terms of "sacred architecture," while important, would limit the possible scope of my

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<sup>3</sup> J Kameron Carter, “Black Malpractice (a Poetics of the Sacred),” *Social Text* 37, no. 2 (2019): 67107, <https://doi.org/10.1215/016424727370991>.

<sup>4</sup> The belief in architecture's potential to guide people toward perfection is most clearly articulated in prison reform debates in the 19th century, where architects, such as Latrobe's pupils William Strickland and Robert Mills (1806-1808), worked on public buildings, churches, colleges, and government buildings in their portfolios, in addition to prison designs.

project and lacks an adequate account of the expanded fields of both architecture and the sacred that are not central to the discipline of sacred architecture. The subsequent interlude applies these frameworks to the building and renovation of "America's First and Greatest Chapel" (Baltimore Basilica of the Assumption) to offer counter and disruptive narratives in a specific context<sup>5</sup>. Through the example of the renovation of the Baltimore Cathedral in 2021, I show how the sacred requires a theopoetic disruption of the dominant Western metaphysics of presence cemented in narrative foundation.

## **DECONSTRUCTING SACRED ARCHITECTURE AS A DISCIPLINARY MARKER**

Reference to “the sacred” does not necessarily incorporate the expansive and multiple understanding of the sacred found in diverse theological discussions. The definition of sacred architecture therefore must remain provisional and not intended to mark a limit or draw a rigid boundary around what can and should be considered sacred architecture. Rather, my reference to the sacred in relation to architecture seeks to clarify the contours of the secular discourses on sacred architecture. A pragmatic definition reflects that “sacred architecture” most immediately refers to the buildings and structures that are sites of communally recognized sites of worship, ritual, or liturgy. For example, the annual award for sacred architecture given by the American Institute of Architects almost exclusively awards buildings that are sites of worship for a “major world religion” – the Abrahamic religions are the most decorated recipients of awards for sacred

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<sup>5</sup> I provide a narrative illustration to expose the role of architecture in shaping and codifying ideas, particularly in relation to the work of Benjamin Henry Latrobe and his interactions with Thomas Jefferson. In a way, the ideas travel with Latrobe and his relationships with both Thomas Jefferson and Archbishop John Carroll. I argue that architecture is not just a physical structure, or its representations, but is deeply connected to, and shift with, religious and political ideals.

architecture. Academic courses on sacred architecture, or religious architecture, offered at architecture and design schools share a similar starting point or central focus - churches, temples, mosques, and shrines.<sup>6</sup> In many texts on sacred architecture, the definition of the sacred follows an anthropological definition of the sacred thus mirroring architecture history and religious studies. In his essay in *Transcending Architecture*, Thomas Barrie, despite his attempt to provide an interdisciplinary dialogue between religion and architecture, is hampered by his reliance on Vitruvius' ancient cosmological, hierarchical ordering, which persists in definitions of sacred architecture.<sup>7</sup> Barrie concludes that "Home in all of these contexts is a sacred realm, which comprises broader ontological territories that transcend the common assignation of home to the secular."<sup>8</sup> I do not discount the ontological importance of dwelling. However, a Heideggerian existential phenomenology has become a central feature of modern definitions of the sacred in architectural history and theory. Theories that describe marking sites and making an ontological home in the world often fail to critique how marking space and naming places supported European colonial projects.

When initiating a transdisciplinary dialogue between theopoetics and architecture, I suggest bracketing the definitions of sacred architecture<sup>9</sup> that rely too

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<sup>6</sup> Of course, the combination of sacred plus architecture invites an explosion of possibilities given the expansive nature of each word.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Barrie, "The Domestic and the Numinous" in Julio Bermudez, ed. *Transcending Architecture*. Catholic University of America Press, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt130h9f6>. The histories of religion and architecture are intertwined in ancient myths and cosmologies. Sacred architecture often participates in the retelling of architecture's history in the participation of a hierarchical ordering civilization that remains at the level of abstraction.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, 39.

<sup>9</sup> Rowan Wilken, "The Critical Reception of Christian Norberg-Schulz's Writings on Heidegger and Place," 2013. *Architectural Theory Review*. 18:3, 340-355. <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.3/375447>.

exclusively on representations of the church. It is necessary to be able to move beyond the generalized categories of church, sanctuary, and home to witness and provide language and support to those who experience the rupture of these places.

To decolonize entrenched hierarchies, this chapter calls for reevaluating taxonomies founded on primitive/civilized dichotomies. Indigenous architectures incorporated spiritual cosmologies through proportions, directions and celestial alignments. However, under colonial regimes, so-called “primitive” sacred sites were dismissed as lacking refinement and thereby classified as existing outside of the boundaries of architecture. By analyzing attributes ascribed to "primitive" architectures (as an antithesis to architecture’s classical ideals), we gain insights into what colonial projects aimed to establish as the ideal reflection of "Man" within the Great Chain of Being.

Decolonizing anthropocentric perspectives that separate and rank life forms is critical. As Keller argues, a "cosmological supplement" is needed to resist "sliding back into a Eurocentrism that presumes (with Kant and the modernity of the Enlightenment) a foundationally anthropocentric ethic." What social and ecological consequences stem from hierarchical rankings of architecture? I suggest meeting architect Mabel Wilson's call to decolonize the "Master Builder's" cosmological myths, which became updated to fit colonizers’ “civilization projects.” These myths justified colonizers' civilization projects by portraying the Master Builder as deriving authority and purpose from a First (Arche) Master Orderer who designed the world *ex nihilo* from a God's-eye view. The mythologized Master Builder gained favor through ontotheological justifications of a divine plan translated into architectural drawings. Reconsidering these prevailing



perspectives in light of colonial epistemologies could help reshape both architectural and theological discourses in the contexts of decolonizing “sacred” architectures.



Figure 18 Didacus Valades, drawing of the “Great Chain of Being” (Latin: *scala naturae*, “Ladder of Being”), *Rhetorica Christiana*, 1579. Wikimedia



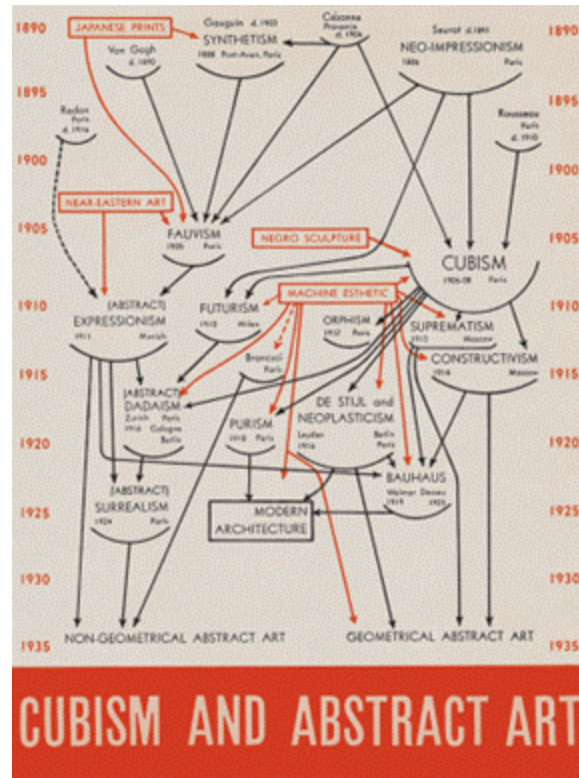


Figure 20—Alfred H. Barr Jr. NY, MoMA 1936 exhibition “Cubism and Modern Art”.

## THE ENLIGHTENMENT, ARCHITECTURE, AND THE ARCHITECT

Decolonization, which sets out to change the world is, obviously, a program of complete disorder. —Franz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 1961: 36

To better understand the structural origins of the classifications of sacred architecture, it is crucial to examine the architect's role during the 18th century. In 18th-century German philosophy, architecture was classified as one of the fine arts and subject to aesthetic analysis.<sup>10</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, for example, distinguished architecture from science, which began to dominate areas of measurement where architecture still had roots. It was argued that architecture added a dimension of aesthetics

<sup>10</sup> In response to an interpretation of architecture as utilitarian and its consistency across time being rooted in functionality, which began with the "primitive hut," Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, in the 1772 pamphlet, *On German Architecture*, argued for an alternative perspective.

that engineering did not possess. In her book, *The Practices of the Enlightenment: Aesthetics, Authorship, and the Public*, Dorothea E. von Mücke defines one of the significant changes that occurred during the Enlightenment: the construction of "the genius." The artistic or architectural genius was an individual who created in ways science could not. The idea of a genius, a person of rare and exceptional gifts, took on a unique quality during the Enlightenment. They were considered polymaths. "Instead of madness, melancholy, or divine inspiration, which were considered relevant aspects of genius at other times, the Enlightenment's understanding of genius emphasized the capacity for originality and radical innovation as its crucial feature. Since this cannot be taught, it is considered a rare gift of nature."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the genius was often regarded as the first among others, in either science or aesthetics and could be seen as holding the position of first, the *arche*-, among the architects of the day. Their insight extended beyond a given field, and they possessed wisdom for an order beyond the average human. The master builder, therefore, adopted aspiring notions of individual capacities that had insight into the social organization, nature, and the human psyche.

Although there are coincidental or hidden religious parallels, Goethe was not arguing for the importance of religion. Instead, he demonstrated how architecture, in the hands of a genius, shaped natural forces to produce a secular spirituality or spiritual response in the individual viewer. The diminution of the consequences on bodies during the building's construction of sacred places can be partly attributed to the prioritization of the "beholder" in the eyes of the architect. In Goethe is architectural philosophy, the

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<sup>11</sup> Dorothea E Von Mücke, *The Practices of the Enlightenment: Aesthetics, Authorship, and the Public* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 51.

object is not meant to be "understood" by the viewer or inhabitant but instead completed by the beholder. Even if the assembly processes of architecture were known to its inhabitants, they would remain inaccessible because only the genius, the architect as master builder, possesses the individual abilities to bring materials together to create the potential for transformation. The idea of individual transformation is vital because Goethe was influenced by Pietism, which emphasizes access to the ineffable in nature through the genius-artist or master-builder. He was attempting to argue that the building is not merely functional or utilitarian, but rather accesses the ineffable in nature through the master-genius-builder.

A rule-oriented poetics gave way to an emphasis on unprecedented innovation and creativity, and art became the exclusive domain of original genius. (xiii) ...there is the radical reconceptualization of artistic production in analogy to the creative forces of nature itself...the concept of original genius as it reorganizes the relationship between art and nature.<sup>12</sup>

In von Mücke's brief depiction, the artist is depicted as a self-generating entity, capable of gathering the forces of nature and innovating without reliance on supernatural powers; he is "a figure that is its own progenitor."<sup>13</sup> The individualistic character of the humanist architect is significant, as they can create regardless of how their work is received. Originality is a superhuman trait that only a "cultivated man" possesses, and it must be preserved or restored to its "original genius." The key feature of genius is originality as a gift of nature. As von Mücke explains, "instead of madness, melancholy, or divine inspiration, which at other times are considered relevant aspects of genius, for the

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<sup>12</sup> Dorothea E. von Mücke, *The Practices of the Enlightenment*, xv.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, 51.

Enlightenment understanding of genius it is the capacity for originality, the capacity for radical innovation that becomes its crucial feature. Since this cannot be taught, it is considered a rare gift of nature.”<sup>14</sup> Goethe explores this concept in his 1772 pamphlet *Von deutscher Baukunst*, *On German Architecture*, which examines the facade of the Strasbourg Cathedral as the product of contemplative practice.<sup>15</sup> The exceptional facade is beget by genius.

According to von Mücke, Goethe is genius is partly conquistador and partly empirical scientist and inventor.<sup>16</sup> Conversely, 19<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder views the genius as an *alter deus* in what he produces, "out of the historically available material..”<sup>17</sup> This concept of an alternate god establishes a parallel between the “overall teleology of an ever-changing nature and the work of art.”<sup>18</sup> Herder believed that “Shakespeare's genius lay in “his ability to work with the heterogeneous elements and the apparent chaos of his own world and shape these elements into perfectly individualized wholes.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, Shakespeare “seems to approach his contemporary culture like a creator, who alone can oversee the totality of his creation. In other words, the playwright's intelligent design, which the audience can only assume as the cause or controlling

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<sup>14</sup> von Mücke, *The Practices of the Enlightenment*, 51.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 55.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, 56

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

instance behind the artwork's perfect illusion, is what makes the artistic genius into an alternate god.”<sup>20</sup> And,

it is the coherence and economy of his artistically shaped play that suggests a controlling point of view, the creator's position, which can oversee the whole in such an ordering fashion that everything comes naturally, organically together as a distinctly individualized totality. The whole that is produced by the artist is the organized totality of an aesthetic illusion that manages to draw the reader or audience into its imaginary universe.<sup>21</sup>

According to von Mücke, “All of the fine arts, including architecture, can produce works of original genius, but all the professions, mechanical arts, and the sciences are excluded from the realm of genius production. With Herder we witness a decisive reformulation of originality: original no longer means radically new with regard to what is known within any given tradition, but rather it means radically individualized, uniquely differentiated, organized, and put together.”<sup>22</sup>

At the moment of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, architecture was understood as "the art of building," and therefore the architect became separated from engineering. Kant, through the figure of the genius, moved *techne* further into the mode of aesthetics and further away from “technology” or “production.” In Kant’s enlightenment ideologies, *techne* travels the elevated path with aesthetics and art and becomes less associated with banal production or utilitarian technology or machinery. “In contrast to the traditional understanding of art as *techne*, as a set of experientially based

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 56.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 57.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

rules and prescriptions of the kind we can find in the traditional crafts and technology, we find art as a site of original innovation that is exactly opposed to the traditional, rule-based understanding of art. And yet not everything original is a product of genius.”<sup>23</sup> Aesthetic judgment was also influenced by some of the rationalist philosophies. For example, scholars applied the “taxonomic methods used by natural historians to discern speciation, in particular racial differences, were applied to the study of the historical transformation of buildings to determine character and organization.”<sup>24</sup> The result was hierarchical categories of architecture, with scholars making “comparative archaeological, ethnographic, and aesthetic evaluations of how far Europe’s architecture had advanced beyond the rest of the world’s ancient and primitive building practices.”<sup>25</sup> These categories persist and appear in contemporary texts on Christian sacred architecture, such as Kevin Seasoltz’s 2005 book, *A Sense of the Sacred: Theological Foundations of Christian Art and Architecture*. Seasoltz begins his study by introducing the subject to the reader through brief descriptions of architecture divided by “culture.” In chapter one, “Culture: The Context for Theology, Liturgy, and Sacred Architecture and Art,” his first section is called “Categories of Cultural Development.” However, Seasoltz uncritically takes his intellectual journey through the lens of Western civilization. He accepts and expects the reader to accept that “human culture in the West might be analyzed in terms of four broad categories that are useful for understanding various cultural experiences and interpretations of life today. These categories are: (1) primal

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<sup>23</sup> Dorothea E. von Mücke, *The Practices of the Enlightenment*, 58

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 28.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*.



culture; (2) classical culture; (3) modern culture; (4) post-modern culture." His seemingly chronological ordering is bound up with colonial ordering. "Primal culture," for Seasoltz, can be described as a singular phenomenon. He collects "Amerindian tribes," "the Aborigines," and "peoples of Africa and South and Central America " under the banner of primitive culture. The West is set apart, "Various aspects of primal culture are being brought to many countries in the Western world today through widespread immigration."<sup>26</sup>

While he later indicates that for him, primal culture represents a period of time in the past that is not exclusive to any geography of the globe, it has connections to a teleological framework. For Europe, it happened in the past and is now seen in other cultures. He writes, "The same phenomenon happened in Europe much earlier." But he then looks at how primal culture can be observed today. The next sections of the chapter are "Native American Culture," "African American Culture," "Hispanic American Culture," and "Asian American Culture," before listing "Classical Culture," "Modern Culture," and "Postmodern Culture" without any qualifying subsections as he did for "Primal Culture."

Seasoltz's goal was to examine the relationship between Christian sacred spaces, liturgy, and architecture. He argues that sacred architecture and art are "above all symbolic;" and can serve as important ways in which God is expressed through diverse cultural forms. He emphasizes that any proposed architectural or artistic models should be carefully evaluated in the context of sound liturgy and theology, but he does so in a

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<sup>26</sup> R Kevin Seasoltz, *A Sense of the Sacred: Theological Foundations of Sacred Architecture and Art* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 4.

way that nearly erases the political and economic forces that participate in the making of sacred architecture.<sup>27</sup> His analysis reveals assumptions about the categorization of civilization that becomes associated with and recognizable in taxonomic ways that are hierarchical and denote the valuation and devaluation of particular building projects compared to others. It is important to recognize that he is writing about the things he is most knowledgeable about and that the epistemologies, philosophies, and theologies that lead to the lack of balance or nuanced contexts plague the majority of us trained in universities in the United States. While Seasoltz does critique current culture, his analysis is underpinned by assumptions that reflect a Eurocentric Western perspective and the persistence of Enlightenment ideals of the human in relationship to the sacred.

Architecture and “the sacred” —as a category used in religious studies and anthropology—are produced by Western colonial epistemologies. Sacred architecture imports assumptions from both and therefore either incorporation requires decolonization. In order to decolonize (sacred) architecture, land, beyond the Lockean notion of private property, must be recognized at every step along architectur’s processes — not just as a statement of land recognition prior to speeches and presentations. *Land* reasserts an understanding of the decolonial “where land and discourse, *territorio y palabra*, cannot be disjointed, severed.”<sup>28</sup> Architectural epistemological categories, such as sacred architecture, rupture when confronted by decolonial and Indigenous

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<sup>27</sup> Seasoltz, *A Sense of the Sacred*, 345-6

<sup>28</sup> Sergio Calderon Harker, “Decolonial: Abya Yala’s Insurgent Epistemologies,” *The Funambulist*, Issue 50, October 25, 2023. <https://thefunambulist.net/magazine/redefining-our-terms/decolonial-abya-yalas-insurgent-epistemologies>

epistemologies that assert “an intimate and indissoluble relation between body, place, and knowledge.”<sup>29</sup> Body, knowledge, and place are constituted by land and materiality that are arranged and ordered.

## **RACE, REASON AND THE MATERIALITY OF ARCHITECTURE**

Decolonizing architecture involves not only interpreting the artifacts we read but also reading for the epistemologies and ontologies that shape the beliefs and actions of the people involved in creating discourse. The category of "the human" is a crucial target for decolonization, as it has been shaped by Eurocentric ideas developed during the Enlightenment, the meaning of which cannot be fully understood without considering colonialism. The humanist man was seen as a moral subject that had the facilities to see “the nature of things,” politically, socially, and aesthetically.

It is challenging to question the role/identity of the architect that was imbued or endowed with qualities of the "cultivated human" during the Enlightenment era. This persona of the architect serves to uphold or support racist and sexist power structures within the development/formation of the professional field of architecture. To challenge this, one approach involves recognizing and acknowledging the hierarchical "Great Chain of Being" framework<sup>30</sup> that was used to classify and rank different forms of life/beings. It

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<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Mabel O. Wilson refers to architectural hierarchies as a "repurposed Chain of Being" that renders "nonwhite people as primitive and uncivilized in turn rationalizing the conquest of their territories." Mabel O. Wilson, *Race and Modern Architecture: A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present* (28). Wilson does not elaborate further on the Chain, but Zakiyyah Iman Jackson spends several pages discussing it in *Becoming Human*. Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiracist World* (New York: New York University Press, 2020).

also involves questioning the legitimacy or validity of using this type of hierarchical classification system.

A second complementary approach would be to try and uncover the narratives/perspectives that were absent or left out of historic accounts by carefully examining and interpreting the physical material qualities and details of existing buildings from that time period. Even without written documentation, the materials and construction of a building can provide clues about the social and cultural contexts in which it was designed and built.

Mabel Wilson's work demonstrates a path forward in this endeavor. In her essay, she explores “how the ontological and epistemological ground for the racialized citizen/noncitizen dynamic is one structured conceptually, physically, and spatially by the earliest American civic buildings and the contexts in which they were built.” Wilson focuses on civic buildings, and I suggest that much can be learned from her work on Latrobe-Jefferson projects when “reading” the Latrobe-Bishop Carroll building, which was constructed after Latrobe worked on The Virginia State Capitol, The U.S. Capitol, and the Virginia State Penitentiary.

Wilson's work is essential in connecting architecture history to the decolonization of European epistemologies of colonialism and ontologies of cosmic order (often recognized as distinct and disparate discourses, each with different methods and interests). She argues that the colonial and Enlightenment technical and aesthetic developments gave rise to the figure of the modern architect, as evidenced by Thomas Jefferson's designs for the Virginia State Capitol. The definition and status of the architect have changed throughout history as scholasticism and secularism have risen, but

the Enlightenment marks a cutoff for the investigation into its changing once again into the modern architect.

The post-Enlightenment cosmological order is reflected in the colonial buildings that architect Mabel O. Wilson identifies as embodying the histories of European colonialism and American slavery. In the crucial edited volume *Race and Modern Architecture: A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present*, Wilson describes the Western epistemes of race and capitalism that informed the built monuments of Thomas Jefferson's vision for America.<sup>31</sup> *Race and Modern Architecture* invites extra- and intra- disciplinary strategies to be mobilized for writing the racial history of modernism.<sup>32</sup> The editor's argue, "Beyond expanding the canon and the archive, architectural historians must develop, or adapt from other disciplines, critical hermeneutical methods for uncovering the role of racial thought in familiar objects and narratives, including those in which race does not appear at first glance to be operative."<sup>33</sup>

Wilson shows that Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* is an example of how someone can articulate "the moral peril of slavery, still tempered by belief in the natural inferiority of the Negro's mind and body."<sup>34</sup> These *Notes* were primarily intended for a

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<sup>31</sup> Benjamin Henry Latrobe, a professionally trained architect from France, plays a significant role in Jefferson's story. (Although Latrobe's professional training sets him apart, his approach to architecture is similar to those who show an interest in architecture and can influence public discourse.) Latrobe immigrated to Richmond, VA in 1796 and became Jefferson's go-to architect, with Jefferson frequently hiring him and recommending him to others seeking an architect, including bishop John Carroll who oversaw the construction of the Baltimore Basilica of the Assumption.

<sup>32</sup> Wilson, *Race and Modern Architecture*, 9.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, 25

European audience, as they were written in response to a set of queries. They provide insight into Jefferson's philosophical underpinnings, which are essential to understanding the significance of the state capital that was under construction while he wrote the *Notes*.<sup>35</sup> Wilson challenges traditional methodologies that look at these artifacts independently, arguing that reading them together is crucial to fully comprehend “the relationship between democratic ideals,” equality, justice, freedom, and racial difference.<sup>36</sup> Jefferson’s *Notes* presents how Enlightenment humanist ideals were not left to abstraction, liberal and humanist ideals were “found” in the idealized white male subject—therefore the construction of a government building was entangled with the construction of the human—represented in *Notes* as Man.

## DECOLONIZING THE ARCHITECT

Wilson turns to Sylvia Wynter to help her articulate the implications of defining “man” in terms of European man. Jackson also builds on Wynter's argument that the Enlightenment resulted in the “overrepresentation of man” (gender, race, nation, class, and religion). “This overdetermined European mode of being human” was a part of the process of natural philosophy and science overtaking religion as the authority on epistemologies. Wilson says, “It was through this rational framework that race came to be considered as biologically determined. This invented “man” was for Wynter ‘made possible only on the basis of the dynamics of a colonizer/colonized relation that the West

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<sup>35</sup> Wilson, *Race and Modern Architecture*, 25.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* 23-24.

was to discursively constitute and empirically institutionalize on the islands of the Caribbean and, later, on the mainland of the Americas.”<sup>37</sup>

In the late 18th century, natural philosophers engaged in debates about the meaning of “observable physiognomic variations (outer character) and perceived mental distinctions such as temperaments and humors (inner character)” within the human species. They searched for natural explanations for these differences.<sup>38</sup> For example, Kant, in his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* written in 1774, put forth theories about human geography. Wilson quotes Kant, who claimed that “The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling. Mr. Hume challenges anyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has shown talents...”<sup>39</sup>

Wilson critiques the limited perspectives through which early American architecture has been studied, pointing out that architectural historians Fiske Kimball and Frederick D. Nichols, who have written on Jefferson's designs, have “failed to examine in depth chattel slavery’s connection to the building's conception, construction, and context.”<sup>40</sup> Wilson notes that during this time period, race was not understood in the way it would later be informed by developments in the fields of biology and evolution, with Linnaeus having published his scientific work on the taxonomy of species based on biology in *Systema Naturae* (1735) and *Species Plantarum* (1753), but Darwin not yet having written *On the Origin of Species* (1859).

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<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, 27

<sup>38</sup> Wilson, *Race and Modern Architecture*, 27.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 26.

The architecture *materializes*, Wilson explains, the “interdependence between the formation of a new white American culture, one that included the arts of building, and the enslavement of African people, justified by their presumed innate mental and physical inferiority, can be found in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, which Jefferson wrote in the same period in which he conceived the designs for the Virginia’s capitol building.”<sup>41</sup> She continues to discuss the ordering of the rooms: “the high ground, both natural and man-made, provided Jefferson the opportunity to architecturally reconcile the paradox between freedom and slavery by placing some of the slave dependencies beneath the main living spaces in rooms and passages hidden from view. . . .” “Wielding the tools of enlightenment, Jefferson rationalized the Negro belonged at the back end of the social and political forces that would advance American civilization, in the same manner he designed their spaces of interminable servitude to occur below ground.” Wilson’s argument and methodology inform my approach to a theopoetics of architecture. She reveals that the epistemologies and materialities of the past are present but often hidden by dominant narratives. However, by enlarging the invisible cracks in the foundation of a building that holds a seat of power, we can expose these hidden histories.

Absence in architecture is more than the hidden voids contained within the skin of the building, absence also includes the erased narratives, laborers, and processes that form “the architectural object.” What architectural narratives get retold and operationalized in works on sacred architecture? The danger of consulting architectural surveys uncritically lies in the reinscription of racialized architect epistemologies and practices that “built” modern architecture. “Modern architecture entailed spatial practices

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<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*



like classifying, mapping, planning, and building that were integral to the erection of this racialized epistemology, and to the development of European colonialism and capitalism. Yet architectural history has produced only a limited body of knowledge about the influence of racial thought on the discipline of architecture.”<sup>42</sup> In the introduction, the editors of the volume *Race and Modern Architecture*, Wilson, Irene Cheng, and Charles L. Davis II, claim, “The influence of race thinking on architectural history can be seen in the epistemic logic of foundational texts in architectural education: architectural history surveys.”<sup>43</sup>

## DECOLONIZING CONCEPTIONS OF THE SACRED

Blackness as a spatial practice cannot be measured. It is a move to the unknowable, uncontained aspects of ordinary Black life. It is a way of reimagining the world and the self beyond equations and boundaries. Immeasurability is not ownership. It is what architecture would become if we were to liberate it from the shackles of property — accelerating our exodus from the trap.

— Emanuel Admassu, “Immeasurability”

This black (w)holiness that (in)sovereignly exceeds the concept, we might call black rapture.

– J. Kameron Carter, “Black Malpractice”

J. Kameron Carter is presently engaged in authoring a book project entitled “Black Rapture: A Poetics of the Sacred.” In his extensive and conceptually intricate essay “Black Malpractice (A Poetics of the Sacred),” which was published in *Social Text*, Carter commences presenting his argument. Due to the subtlety of his position, it necessitates greater attention than can be afforded within the confines of this text.

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<sup>42</sup> Wilson, *Race and Modern Architecture*, 4.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

Nevertheless, Carter's innovative methodology, which he refers to as "black rupture" (and alternatively, "black rapture" or "black malpractice" in other sections of his paper), constitutes his formulation of a poetics of the sacred that centers blackness and challenges versions of the sacred that align with, support, and at times, produce white supremacy. To accomplish this, Carter critiques political theology that presumes the correctness of the state, even while criticizing the state apparatus.

Following the events in Charlottesville, VA in August 2017, *The Washington Post* featured an article that included the theological interpretation of Rev. Bill Lamar, pastor of the Metropolitan AME Church of Washington, DC. Carter employs Lamar's words, uttered in response to the violence at Charlottesville, as an illustrative example they demonstrate how Lamar's theological and political beliefs presuppose the (reformed) state apparatus as necessary. Lamar posits that Christians, including black Christians, bear much of the responsibility for the election of a neofascist and for the events in Charlottesville, as they have failed to fulfill their prophetic duty and instead have adhered to vague notions of personal salvation – they have performed theological malpractice.

Carter, while acknowledging that he and Lamar share similar sociopolitical orientations, seeks to move beyond merely denouncing present-day instances of white supremacy and violence. He critiques Lamar's depiction of theological malpractice, which appears to suggest that the country's fortunes and misfortunes are directly tied to proper practice in the domains of political and theological rationality, as it implies that "religion is our (political) salvation." According to Carter, Lamar's argument implies that religion has neglected its responsibility to maintain the state on a morally upright path. Instead, Carter argues that it is necessary to break free from the presumption that the state

defines the social telos, and that religion's role should be to uphold the state while pushing it towards reform. Carter claims that “theological orthopraxis,” as he sees it, is closely intertwined with the state order, which prevents “critique from going far enough” and makes it exceptionally difficult to critically analyze and deconstruct “our current theopolitical, settler-colonial fascism.”<sup>44</sup>

Carter's argument posits the necessity of disrupting the kind of theology that presupposes a coupled relationship with state politics. To this end, Carter offers his own definition of “political theology” as distinct from the political theology that originates in Carl Schmitt's philosophy of politics. Specifically, Carter defines “political theology” as the mutually affirming relationship between the categories of the political and the theological, which he identifies as a “singular terror” in the United States. Carter's use of the term “political theology” aims to capture more than what Schmitt originally intended, as he applies it to the context of a black poetics of the sacred. As Carter explains, the political and the theological are “internally braided together in the logic of the state,” such that they cannot be separated. Monumental constructions— Palladian style government architecture and associated public gardens/parks designed to feature sculptures of confederate leaders like the above example in Charlottesville—often function to monumentalize the state and are imbued with logics that build an America struggling to reconcile with the “unincorporable limits to the self” that shape these monuments and their founding mythologies. In Carter's view, it is this limit that can be identified as “blackness.”

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<sup>44</sup> Carter, “Black Malpractice,” 68-69.

Black rapture, malpractice is Carter's approach to the sacred, which embraces the uncontainable *ekstasis*<sup>45</sup> of blackness. The sacred, in its "right hand" form, seeks to control and set apart moments of living in black life that are deemed taboo, including joy and movements that do not conform to white norms. Through his poetic language, Carter shapes a notion of the ek-stasis of black poetics of the sacred as a radical and transformative force that disrupts dominant understandings of the sacred.

The experience of the ek-static — to be moved, to be terrified, to love, to hate, to live magically, drunkenly, wanderously, wonderously, erotically, joyously, childishly, prayerfully, in the radicality of a certain moving stillness....<sup>46</sup>

Carter's theoretical project is concerned with the concept of a poetics of the sacred and its relationship with black theological malpractice. The central objective of his project is to challenge the sacred profane dichotomy, which restricts the category of the sacred. Carter argues that rigidly stabilizing and ordering concepts of sacredness—and that I argue are associated with monumental mythic architecture—need to be destabilized and ruptured. The conventional desire for stability and order manipulates and molds materiality to create a sense of duration; human scale and measurement are centered in architecture and cosmic order.

One key element of Carter's theoretical framework is the double-sided nature of the sacred, which goes beyond sacred-profane divisions. The sacred, in its divine and taboo sense, is intended to be set apart. However, in English, the taboo aspect of the

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<sup>45</sup> Carter's notion of a black poetics of the sacred connect to theopoetics that emerge from process theology and philosophy that Catherine Keller weaves throughout her work. Carter more directly engages Keller's theopoetics in the work: J Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, 74.

sacred has been lost. Carter draws on Agamben's notion of *sacer*, which retains both meanings of the term, to highlight the ambiguity inherent in the term itself. By emphasizing the ambiguity embedded in the term, Carter extends Bataille's categories of the sacred.

Carter's inspiration for his project came from a quote by Rev. Lamar who referred to the events as a "crisis of the sacred" and "theological malpractice." Carter uses this idea to develop a poetics of the sacred that embraces "black malpractice," advocating for a reconsideration of the sacred through a poetic lens that imagines blackness as a means of disrupting and amplifying the sacred in new political and world-building ways. For Carter, world-building is a crucial aspect of the poetic, as it relates to becoming in all its expressive forms.

Carter distinguishes between two categories of the sacred: a politically-bound (right-handed) and a potentially disruptive (left-handed) sacred. The right-handed form of the sacred represents a pure, solidified, and secure form of the sacred that is employed to advance state projects and charismatic political leadership to generate a homogeneous, "pure" sacred designed to maintain order. On the other hand, the left-handed form of the sacred, which is linked to blackness, is heterogeneous, immanent, and impure. Carter envisions this form of the sacred as an unrestrained expenditure of energy that is inherently excessive, ecstatic, and rapturous. This conceptualization of the sacred is not bound to state projects aimed at preserving or solidifying them in homogenous structures based on an exclusively utilitarian economy of exchange.

In the right-handed, homogeneously sacred sense, violations of "taboos" and "rules" designed to ensure propriety and comportment are seen as unholdable,

unhaveable, and uncapturable. The ecstasy of social dance at festivals resists the juridical-economic order that seeks to seize and reduce the unhaveable to ownership or property. Conversely, the left-handed form of the sacred is boundary-less and implies the capacity to rupture the bounded sacredness of propriety and property. Carter contends that the energies of heterogeneity are conventionally considered unusable, invaluable, or excess – a type of energy-in-flux, or a charged "base matter" that can break the conventional barriers upon which homogeneity relies.

In the context of architecture's involvement in organizing assemblies, the concept of "heterogeneous" holds direct relevance to the discussion of order. This concept carries a dual nature that is both powerful and dangerous to political systems, rendering it "dangerously sacred." This duality is of significant importance for the creation of new world-building methods that can disrupt the sacred without entirely rejecting it. As Bataille<sup>47</sup> proposes, the heterogenous is "excessive or abyssal" rather than dialectical, and should not be seen as a retreat to the profane. While Carter acknowledges that these disruptive forces can be utilized for "right-hand" purposes in order to seal the breach of heterogeneity, this approach would ultimately suppress the "base energies" that are capable of dismantling the structure before the predetermined time decided by those in power. Such base energies exceed the limits of order and pose a threat to the status quo. According to Alexander Riley, mobilizing a discourse of the sacred for black studies is necessary, as the concept of the sacred embodies an inherent ambiguity between purity

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<sup>47</sup> Andrew Ballantyne, *Architecture Theory: A Reader in Philosophy and Culture* (London; New York: Continuum, 2005), 5. "Architecture," says Bataille, "is the expression of the very being of societies', therefore it is useful in giving us insight into the real values of a society." (Ballantyne on Bataille, *Architecture Theory*, 5).

and impurity, “The sacred is not solely associated with holiness or consecration but can also be considered accursed.”<sup>48</sup> The sacred is linked to ceaseless rupture and rapture, as a harbinger of a sociality that is without limit or completion. “Order,” on the other hand, “is constituted as the counterrevolutionary evisceration of that which exceeds order,” without returning to its original condition or state that it had negated.<sup>49</sup>

In his discussion of a poetics of the sacred, Carter emphasizes that the sacred is not transcendental, pure, or beneficent, but rather base, impure, and grounded in the earth. He approaches the sacred as a threshold that allows for the emergence of alternative forms of life and unrepresentable presences.

the sacred...as figuring a poetics of malpractice black (religious) study, is neither transcendental, pure, nor beneficent but, rather, is base, stank, impure, low to the ground, underground, of and with the earth....I approach the sacred as a kind of pathological and ek-static threshold before which other, differential and unrepresentable presences, genres or forms of life, unplotable gathering in representation’s colonizing ruins, alternative ways of being with the earth, come into view.<sup>50</sup>

This passage has significant implications for a theopoetics (of architecture) that seeks to name the limits of “the sacred” while holding on to “ways of being with the earth” that do not preclude divinity, holiness, spirituality, or deep wisdoms. Carter’s connection between affects, race, and the earth shifts the focus away from representation and towards the forces of the sacred. His language is particularly useful for avoiding projects that erase or dismiss blackness. A poetics of black malpractice embraces the base, underground, and ékstatic. The earth and the ground detranscendentalize the sacred.

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<sup>48</sup> Carter, “Black Malpractice,” 72.

<sup>49</sup> Carter, “Black Malpractice,” 72.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, 74

To effectively dismantle the sacred infused with whiteness and colonial epistemologies and ontologies in theopoetics of architecture, it is crucial to consider Carter's work and other efforts to decolonize the sacred. Carter's ideas encourage the conceptualization of theopoetics as a form of theological malpractice, which involves reading against or alongside theological categories and representations of the sacred. The world has been constructed and maintained through mythologies of assembly and assemblage in theological ways. Carter's insights challenge this by approaching the sacred as a base, impure, and underground force that is connected to the earth and race. Therefore, a theopoetics of architecture should seek to detranscendentalize the sacred and redirect attention to what is beneath, the earth upon which structures are built.

This is a malpractice spirituality, a non/theological or, better put, an atheological and thus a 'godless mysticism' that points to frenzied existence that is so much more than resistance because such indeterminate non/existence is on the far side of the concept, on the far side of a god-concept, on the far side of a god that stalls out as a static concept and that thus installs the concept — on the far side, I mean, of 'God as a Failed Figuration,' to echo poet Phillip B. Williams, that which ground 'the American aesthetic.'

Reading architecture in this way supports J. Kameron Carter's definition of political theology as theology that supports the teleology, inevitability, of the state. Civic buildings such as the Virginia State and U.S. Capitol's "edifices stand as the Enlightenment's monuments to the power of reason and the virtues of equality, justice, and freedom."<sup>51</sup>

In his most recent book, *The Anarchy of Black Religion: A Mystic Song*, Carter does not leave much hope for centering architecture as a source for creative undoing of

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<sup>51</sup> Carter, "Black Malpractice," 25.



the present oppressive orders. Any architecture that remains in the face of decolonial deconstruction must be able to answer for its complicity to colonial cosmological order and control. An anarchy of architecture—perhaps we could call it “an-architecture” or “anarch/itecture”—demands a disruption of origins of civilization present in both religious epistemologies and architectural epistemologies. A poetics of the sacred combined with an-architecture begins to approach what theopoetics of architecture combined with decolonizing architecture has hoped to achieve while also committing to engaging with the architectures of material assemblies variously seen as buildings, public spaces, infrastructures. Carter’s use of the word anarchy continues his project to rupture the sacred. The Greek word *archē* (ἀρχή) does not refer to literal architectural projects; instead, Carter seizes on architecture’s etymology to capture an “understanding of colonial and capitalist modernity as premised on an *archē*, or specific foundation and principle of sovereignty or rule (these terms being within the semantic range of the Greek word *archē*) connected with the modern invention of religion.”<sup>52</sup> A black poetics of the sacred and an-architecture demands the rupture of “being and knowing, of ontology and epistemology” composed of “a unique mythos and cosmology” that has come to “organize the present” —a modern age characterized as “the imposition of a racial capitalist cosmology upon the earth.”<sup>53</sup> The decolonization of sacred architecture can alternatively be described as seeking an “alternate cosmology, an an-archic or unstately and potentially stateless disturbance of the *archē* of religion” necessary to rupture the

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<sup>52</sup> J. Kameron Carter, *The Anarchy of Black Religion: A Mystic Song* (Duke University Press, 2023), 6.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

foundations of the modern world and its order.<sup>54</sup> An architecture that can—if one can—survive the decolonization of sacred architecture incorporates, in theopoetic terms, a “speculative inhabiting of an alternate cosmology, an anarchic imagining of matter.”<sup>55</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In researching recent projects on sacred Christian architecture, I have found that by either not experiencing the place myself or not doing additional research of my own, I am left being told what the building does in a too straightforward way. This is reflected in public statements about architecture and in the architect's statement. Instead of dismissing those interpretations, a theopoetics of architecture is an attempt to recognize the materiality and its associated experience of place. It is a way of communicating architecture that is not predetermined by how the sacred is represented in a particular building. It is a way of experiencing that is not purely phenomenological but also capable of engaging with the developing discourses on affect, trauma studies, and new materialism to think about how a building performs apart from representation. Representation is limited by the framing of the developed discourse, both on the micro-scale of the individual designer and at the macro-scale of discourse.

I have argued that the analysis of architecture's relevance to philosophies and theologies of religion is limited by turns to sacred architecture, an established discipline that relies on architecture history coming from European epistemologies. Defining architecture's relationship to theology in terms of sacred architecture, while important,

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, 10.

would limit the possible scope of my project and lacks an adequate account of the expanded fields of both architecture and the sacred that are not central to the discipline of sacred architecture.

A theopoetics of architecture seeks to suture common conceptualizations of capital “A” Architecture (buildings, infrastructure, objects of capital) with material assemblies<sup>56</sup> that may not typically be registered as holding the Western epistemological calling cards of aesthetics, symbolic, or semiotic meaning. In other words, the notion of a clear demarcation between architecture and non-architecture is a prevalent one, deepened by the binary between the housed and the unhoused. The experience of being without property or being homeless is often excluded from the purview of architecture, resulting in a limited definition of the discipline, and the subdiscipline of sacred architecture, reflective of Western epistemologies. This approach emphasizes the deconstruction and decolonization of constructedness as well as the constructive, poietic, potential in the process of decolonizing hierarchical<sup>57</sup> (from *hiera*, sacred rights; *arkhein*, chief ruler) ordering systems. Moreover, the dialogues that maintain a perceived separation between architecture and non-architecture call into question the dichotomy between the housed

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<sup>56</sup> The use of the phrase *material assemblages* in the context of this dissertation assumes the inclusion of land-ecosystem. Sergio Calderon Harker describes “within the decolonial epistemologies of Abya Yala, the land repressed a greater ecosystem.” Harker uses the Indigenous name Abya Yala in place of the “American” continent as a practice of the decolonization of Western epistemologies.

<sup>57</sup> Etymologies are found at *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Hier-arch-ia: "ranked division of angels" from Greek hierarkhia "rule of a high priest," from hierarkhes "high priest, leader of sacred rites," from ta hiera "the sacred rites" (neuter plural of hieros "sacred;" see ire) + arkhein "to lead, rule" (see archon). <https://www.etymonline.com/word/hierarchy>

arch-, word-forming element meaning "chief, principal; extreme, ultra; early, primitive," from Latinized form of Greek arkh-, arkhi- "first, chief, primeval," combining form of arkhos "a chief, leader, commander," arkhein "be first, begin" (see archon). <https://www.etymonline.com/word/arch->

and the unhoused. The experiences of being unhoused or without property largely exclude those experiences of the built environment because they fall to the margins of architecture or are completely out of frame in professional practice.<sup>58</sup>

These epistemologies and theologies shape our understanding of architecture and, by extension, sacred architecture. This project is less about the shortcomings of studies of sacred architecture; it is much humbler in its scope even though it is ambitious in its recombining of elements from seemingly disparate topics. I pursue this by engaging architects, architecture theorists, architectural historians, and philosophers of architecture, to create more connections between theology and the continuing developments in the conceptualization and practice of architecture that lie out of the frame of general and academic discussion of sacred architecture. In order to ethically pursue architecture as a source for understanding the process of making, I am committed to being led by those architects and designers who are pursuing social justice in spatial and design practices.

One approach to decolonizing sacred architecture is to explore the possibilities of multiplying counter-narratives and recognizing heterodoxies in the midst of orthodoxies, as in heterogeneity. Additionally, discovering cracks in the foundations of established traditions and considering the possibility of letting go of principles that no longer serve their intended purpose can also be fruitful avenues for inquiry. Ultimately, the complexity of the relationship between sacred architecture and its origins, its *arche*, demands that

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<sup>58</sup> Anecdotally, there is a limited but prevalent presence of “homelessness architecture,” which tends to reside in very specific niches. One of the places can be described as community engagement projects found in student work, philanthropic competitions, municipal RFPs (requests for proposals), and voluntary or pro-bono work. These types of projects, “designs for ‘the homeless’ brought me in closer proximity to working with architecture students as an invited external critic to student presentations.

scholars and practitioners alike engage in ongoing, nuanced discussions about the nature of sacred space and its role in our lives.

## INTERLUDE ONE

### AMERICA'S FIRST CATHEDRAL



*Figure 21 Watercolor by the "Father of American Architecture" Benjamin Henry Boneval Latrobe (1764-1820) of the Baltimore Basilica, the first Catholic Cathedral constructed in the United States. Designed by Latrobe, it was constructed from 1806-1821. Maryland Cent*

When narratives about place and property become more restrictive than generative, communities require new frameworks and practices to move beyond conventional, technical renovations that exclusively address material and property concerns. Design justice principles can serve as such frameworks, demystifying exclusionary practices in architecture and making decision-making processes more accessible to those most likely to be affected by their outcomes. These principles can also help religious communities confront troubling histories related to their properties and infrastructures. By reframing conversations about building vacancies and disrepair in terms of justice-seeking processes, faith communities may view architectural renovation and repair as opportunities to engage in both material and social transformations. This essay situates a discussion of renovation as a process for seeking justice. Historical and contemporary examples provide multiple disciplinary entry points that consider the

ideological, historical, physical, and human dimensions of architecture's roles in transforming the built environment.

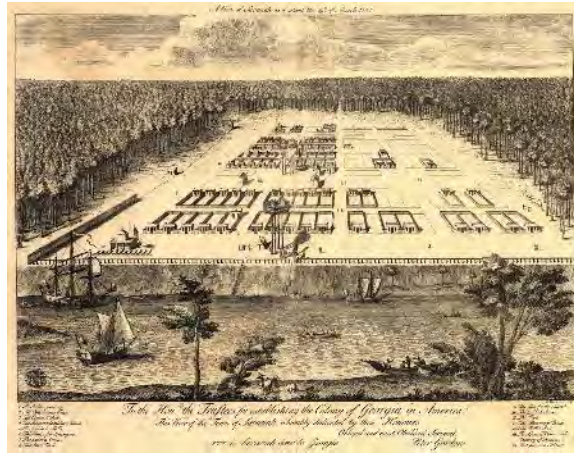


Figure 22Image. View of the town of Savannah, Colony of Georgia, 1734, drawing by Peter Gordon. Source: Library of Congress. Included in Emanuel Admassu and Jen Wood, “Architecture Without Measure: Notes on Legibility,” e-flux, 2021.

## LESSONS FROM BALTIMORE

The Baltimore Cathedral – Basilica of the Assumption – is recognized as the first church built in America after the signing of the Declaration of Independence.<sup>1</sup> Numerous articles commemorated the 200th anniversary of the cathedral's dedication in 2021.<sup>2</sup> However, the absence of any mention of America's racist histories in constructing and structuring space, or “White Christianity's” participation and identity formation in

<sup>1</sup> “America’s First Cathedral: History and Architecture of Baltimore Basilica of the Assumption,” <https://americasfirstcathedral.org/history-architecture>

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan M. Pitts, “Baltimore Basilica to celebrate its 200th anniversary with special Mass, new adoration chapel,” 2021. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/bs-md-basilica-200th-20210531-mdzg75qvpncngtorgigzziblq-story.html>

relation to property ownership, is striking.<sup>3</sup> Property lines in the United States are linked to the racialization of property and the conceptualization of “the human.”<sup>4</sup>



Figure 23 The Basilica of the Assumption in Baltimore celebrated the 200th anniversary of its dedication in 2021. Photo: John G. White



Figure 24 A watercolor by architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764-1820) showing the architectural elevation and cross-section indicating the interior details. The bell towers are not the same as were actually built. This piece is in the Baltimore Basilica archives, photograph by Versluis 2013.

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<sup>3</sup> Robert P. Jones, *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity* (Simon & Schuster, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017).

Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World* (New York: New York University Press, 2020).



In "Restoring America's First Cathedral," architect John G. Waite recounts the history and renovation of the building of America's first cathedral.<sup>5</sup> The article was published in the Spring 2022 volume of the *Sacred Architecture Journal* as part of a collection of essays centered around the celebration of the Baltimore Cathedral. Waite reveals how some of the architect's processes participated in constructing the church's narrative and the idealization of sacred architecture's performativity. By describing the context and Archbishop John Carroll's motivation surrounding the cathedral's construction, Waite sheds light on the founding bishop's vision for the early Catholic Church in the newly independent nation. Reading his account alongside Baltimore Diocese' presiding Archbishop William E. Lori's homily delivered at the cathedral's bicentennial in 2021 shows how the narratives support each other.<sup>6</sup> However, counternarratives about the church's history are challenging to imagine, let alone hear. These narratives should not be viewed as unfortunate incidents that remain in the past and left to be addressed in separate statements on racism, but rather as a sacred rupture of the forces that allow for the duration of antiblack ideals and virtues to persist in unsuspecting places, particularly those identified as sacred and built with benevolence.

At the time of its dedication in 1821, the Baltimore Basilica, alongside the Virginia State Capitol and the U.S. Capitol, was regarded as the epitome of modern architecture in America, symbolizing the new republic's civilizing achievements.

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<sup>5</sup> John G. Waite, "Restoring America's First Cathedral," *Sacred Architecture Journal*, Volume 41, 2022. [https://www.sacredarchitecture.org/articles/restoring\\_americas\\_first\\_cathedral](https://www.sacredarchitecture.org/articles/restoring_americas_first_cathedral)

<sup>6</sup> The Most Rev. William E. Lori, "No Other Structure: The Baltimore Cathedral's Central Role in American History," *Sacred Architecture Journal*, Volume 41, 2022. [https://www.sacredarchitecture.org/articles/no\\_other\\_structure\\_the\\_baltimore\\_cathedrals\\_central\\_role\\_in\\_american\\_history](https://www.sacredarchitecture.org/articles/no_other_structure_the_baltimore_cathedrals_central_role_in_american_history)

However, what remains inadequately addressed are the ways in which the church's symbolism relied on epistemologies formed through slavery and colonialism. As scholar Zakiyyah Iman Jackson explains, these forces "catalyzed the conscription of black people into... racialized conceptions of 'modernity' and 'universal humanity.'"<sup>7</sup> Additionally, Jackson clarifies how slavery's "archival footprint" – which documents the accounting of goods and materials that "placed black humans, horses, cattle, and household items all on the same bill of purchase" -- reflects the architectural footprint created by people and materials considered "objects of construction."<sup>8</sup>



Figure 25 Latrobe watercolor painting of the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C.

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<sup>7</sup> Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World* (NYU Press, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

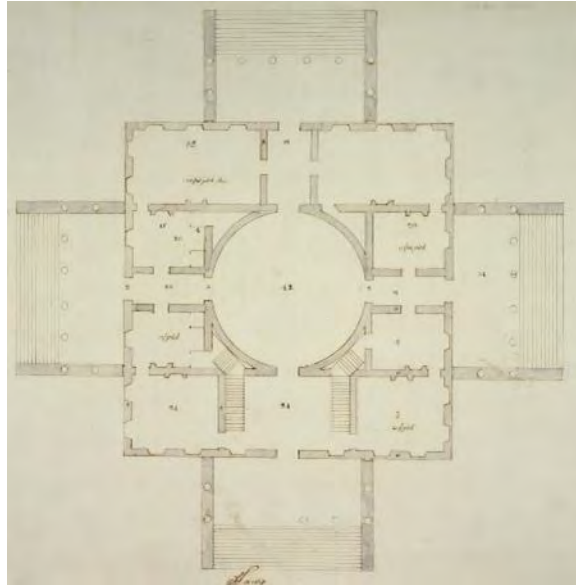


Figure 26 Jefferson, Thomas, 1743-1826, Date 1792

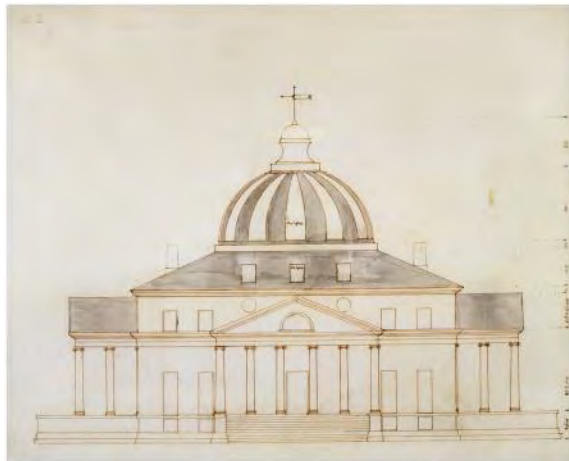


Figure 27 Jefferson, Thomas, 1743-1826, Date 1792.



Figure 28 Latrobe. [United States Capitol, Washington, D.C. Elevation of west front with propylaea] / B.H. Latrobe Feb. 4, 1811.

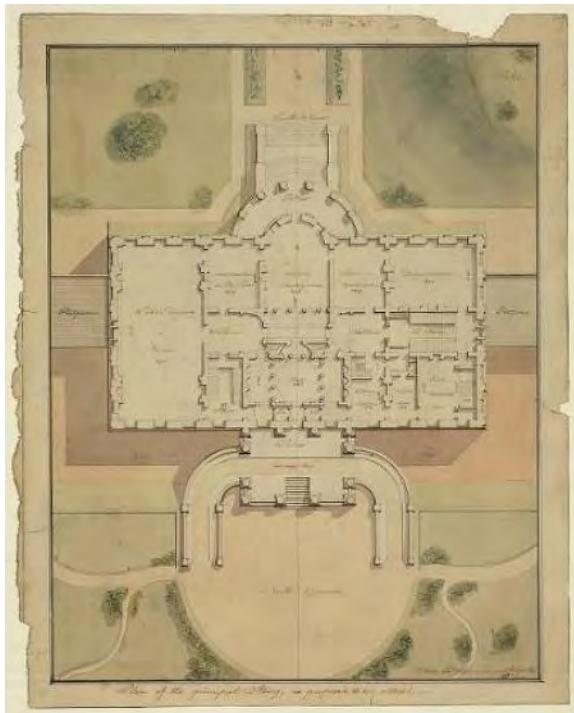


Figure 29 Latrobe. [United States Capitol, Washington, D.C. Elevation of west front with propylaea] / B.H. Latrobe Feb. 4, 1811. Latrobe. The White House, Washington, D.C. Site plan and principal story plan, architectural design. Wikimedia

The calculation of available resources and the measurement of the building's footprint are part of a system that relied on "this ledger's biopolitical arithmetic—its calculation of humanity—dislocated, depersonalized, and collapsed difference, except in the area of market value" Slavery's archival footprint includes not only the footprints of

buildings and their sites, but also the bodies, energies, tools, and materials used in the site clearance and erection of the building. If we consider sacred architecture primarily as a completed building form, we may overlook the extended process of making that is intertwined with histories of exploitation and oppression. The ledger of transactions that accounted for the making of architecture included black people alongside other procured items is also an artifact of the making of sacred architecture. Notably, neither the architect nor the patron occupies a line item in these records.



*Figure 30 Benjamin Latrobe's 1797 watercolor of the Virginia State Capitol - the first Roman temple style building in colonized America (1788).*



*Figure 31 The twenty-four skylights in the dome were uncovered and new windows were installed. The original copper and wood shingle dome sheathing*



*Figure 32 Watercolor, ink, and pencil on paper drawing of "Mr. Robertson's Quarry near Aquia, Virginia", ca. 1806, from the Latrobe Sketchbooks, by Benjamin Henry Latrobe. Maryland Center for History and Culture*



*Figure 33 Watercolor on paper drawing of "Warwick Iron Furnace, Chester County, PA", May 6, 1803, from the Latrobe Sketchbooks, by Benjamin Henry Latrobe. Maryland Center for History and Culture*

These events cannot be recollected as if they are distant and antiquated ideas we have transcended. While land acknowledgments and the identification of conquerors and enslavers among our nation's "founding fathers" are important, it is concerning that the goal of these practices may be assumed rather than understood as disruptive to the systems and institutions that persist. The growing calls for equity, inclusion, and justice are accommodated by institutions that adapt discursively but fail to face the possibility of relinquishing control of the given order. For instance, Archbishop John Carroll, America's first bishop and one of the founders of Georgetown University, owned slaves, was the master of others on church-run plantations, and deeded his plantation, the White



Marsh Plantation, to the American Catholic Church specifically, to become incorporated into the church's property after he died.<sup>9</sup>



*Figure 34 Bishop John Carroll lays the cornerstone for the Cathedral of the Assumption in Baltimore, 1806*



*Figure 35 South elevation of Latrobe's first classical design, 1806. Image: Public Domain*

<sup>9</sup> Suzanne Monyak, "Built by Slaves and Jesuits," *The Hoya*, 2015. <https://thehoya.com/slavery/>



Figure 36 Section of Latrobe's classical design, 1808. Image: Public Domain



Figure 37 Watercolor on paper of "An overseer doing his duty near Fredericksburg, Virginia", ca. 1798, from the Latrobe Sketchbooks, by Benjamin Henry Latrobe. The scene shows a white overseer smoking a pipe and standing on a tree stump over two African American



Figure 38 Collier and his family on Sugarloaf Mountain. Latrobe, 1816.

Given these complex histories, how can we view the Basilica's construction within "a landscape of slavery?"<sup>10</sup> To develop a set of analytical tools for contemporary

<sup>10</sup> Dale W. Tomich, Reinaldo Funes Monzote, Carlos Venegas Fornias, and Rafael de Bivar Marquese, *Reconstructing the Landscapes of Slavery: A Visual History of the Plantation in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2021).



use, it is essential to move beyond a mere denunciation of slavery in general. Instead, we must examine the mechanisms that established and perpetuated a system extending beyond what is broadly referred to as slavery. These mechanisms uphold racialized hierarchies and exploitative practices, particularly those entangled with and obscured by value and virtue, such as those associated with property. The stories of buildings require a direct engagement with the specificities of the site and socio-historical contexts.

In recent years, there have been resounding demands to foreground equity, inclusion, and justice in all areas of society, including architecture. However, the renovation of the Baltimore Cathedral demonstrates friction between discourses that adapt to these calls without challenging the underlying systems and institutions that persist. While the renovation of the Cathedral seeks to reinforce its symbolic presence as a house of worship – celebratory declarations resound in public events and award ceremonies -- it does little to challenge the underlying power structures that enabled its construction in the first place.



*Figure 39 The interior of the basilica after the restoration. Photo: John G. White*



*Figure 40 The original appearance of the interior, engraving by William Goodacre, 1820s. Image: Public Domain*



*Figure 41 The dove of the Holy Spirit crowns the oculus of the central dome. Photo: [wikimedia.org/Smallbones](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Smallbones)*

## **DESIGN JUSTICE FRAMEWORKS**

Buildings are not just physical structures. As noted above in the story of Baltimore's Basilica, they also represent and materialize the ideologies, philosophies, and theologies of the individuals involved in their making. The interlude operates between theory and practice; it is a praxis of uncovering how narratives about space are made and how those myths implicitly or explicitly carry certain values or ideals into the world through methods that interrogate sociohistorical contexts and speak to the hidden

processes of architecture, such as those demonstrated by the organizers of the 2021 MoMA exhibition *Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America*, “MoMA’s first exhibition to explore the relationship between architecture and the spaces of African American and African diaspora communities.” The creative thinkers included in this exhibited work interrogate the ways in which State, religious, and cultural architectural projects are emblematic of the “centuries of disenfranchisement and race-based violence... embedded in nearly every aspect of America’s design.”<sup>11</sup>

Architectural design and spatial justice principles provide a generative starting point for many contemporary spatial design practices. An evolving set of ideas that frame multiple design disciplines, including architecture design justice principles “challenge designers to think about how good intentions are not necessarily enough to ensure that design processes and practices become tools of liberation, and to develop principles that might help practitioners avoid the (often unwitting) reproduction of existing inequalities.” These principles guide architectural designers to reflect on decision-making at multiple phases of a design project. From project scoping to construction, design justice principles encourage a more intentional engagement with questions about who stands to benefit or incur harm as a consequence of decision-making.

Faith-based communities that are challenged by buildings in disrepair or needing renovation may find relevance in all of these principles. As a collection, they provide a robust framework to ensure that design processes and their outcomes are inclusive,

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<sup>11</sup> Sean Anderson and Mabel O. Wilson. *Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America*. Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.). 2021.

accountable, and working actively against the reproduction of social inequity. Some ideas may be particularly resonant with faith-based communities and institutions. Architecture processes may be a vehicle to sustain, heal, and empower communities that encounter the physical spaces of faith-based institutions as extensions of their missions and values.

Design practices seeking justice also center the voices and perspectives of those most likely to be impacted by the outcomes of the design process and those who may have been affected by troubling histories associated with a building and its institutional affiliations. Design justice lenses view change and transformation as emergent from an accountable, accessible, and collaborative process. On-going dialogues build trust and help create a sense of ownership, stewardship, and investment within renovation or repair processes.

#### United methodist church (UMC) Example

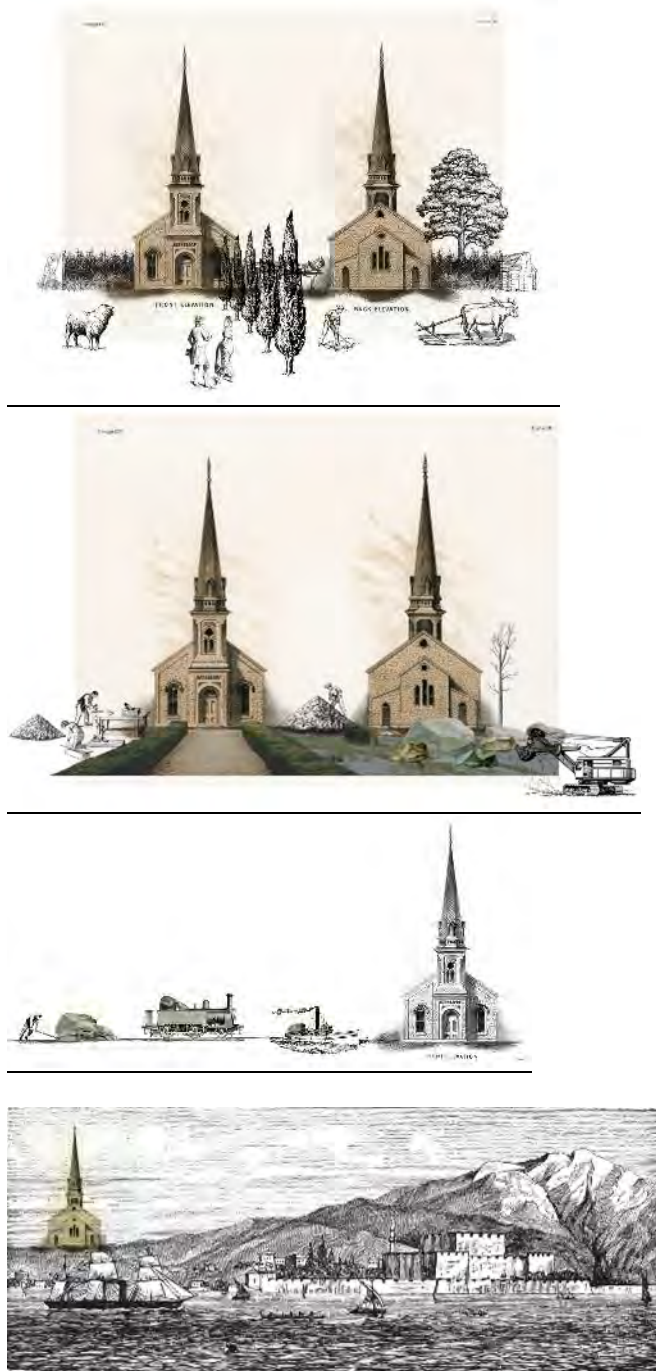
Beyond symbolic or aesthetic registers, decisions about space-making can be deployed in ways that acknowledge how spatial organization has historically choreographed and codified inequitable social hierarchies. Design justice as a process and practice is iterative - gestures build refinement through a critique of systems such as economies of human and material exploitation and extraction. Stages of a design process, inevitable in the engagement with making or remaking buildings, involve difficult decisions that require conceptual or ideological lenses. “Why should we choose to design this over another option?” Design justice frameworks might be useful in articulating the ways in which values and ideas are made material and experiential in the built environment.

Institutional constraints are familiar territories for architects; although religious institutions bring added layers of tradition, design justice embraces the challenges of thinking creatively amid seemingly intractable systems of order. Faith-based institutions have an opportunity to explore how their ideals might be drivers for decision-making about space and, through these lenses, spatial justice.

## **SPATIAL JUSTICE**

Decolonizing architectural myths and furthering spatial design justice action can help demystify exclusionary practices in architecture and make decision-making processes more accessible to those most likely to be impacted by their outcomes. Architects and designers can collaborate with faith communities to create spaces that acknowledge troubling histories without erasing their narratives. They can work intentionally to create pathways for participation that honor a diversity of lived experiences as expertise. They can pursue collective and participatory approaches to restoration, renovation, and repair that do not reproduce social and cultural inequities.

### Material Histories and Forgotten Slave Landscapes



*Figure 42 The number of fields at play is innumerable, and yet people navigate them despite power's seemingly chaotic or arbitrary organization. The buildings they manage appear ordered and are indeed (over)ordered in many ways. However, people do not interact with systems one at a time. Buildings' materiality gives the impression that the environment is controlled. Along with light and ventilation, walls and doors regulate the building's environment.*

## CHAPTER THREE

### PANOPTICISM, DEBILITY, AND PASTORAL POWER:

#### ARCHITECTURES OF CARE, CONFINEMENT, AND CORRECTION

The analysis, made in terms of power, must not assume that the sovereignty of the state, the form of the law, or the overall unity of a domination are given at the outset; rather, these are only the terminal forms power takes. It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization.<sup>1</sup>

— Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality I*

#### INTRODUCTION | CRISIS: POWER, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Previous actions taken by the police, public health officials, and mayor's office of public works against people located near the area referred to as Mass and Cass are not new events; from the perspective of biopolitics, the area historically has been the center of biopolitics in Boston.<sup>2</sup> After the events surrounding Operation Clean Sweep, questions remain concerning the forms of power enacted and exerted in the coordinated actions of both police and public works.<sup>3</sup> Against the background of emerging political and social acts targeting both a "hotspot" and a "population," what composition of powers might we identify within the dual deployment of an *Executive Order* issued by Boston interim mayor Kim Janey aimed at eradicating tent encampments and a *Declaration of a Public*

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality I: An Introduction* (Vintage Books, 1980), 92.

<sup>2</sup> I included a description of the events surrounding Operation Clean Sweep in the co-authored paper "Contested Territories." R. Kyle Warren and Ben Peterson, "Contested Territories: Evaluating the Limits and Liberties of Design in Public Space," *Proceedings of School of Thought Proceedings: Rethinking Architectural Pedagogy*, March 5-7, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix "Timeline."

*Health Emergency* at Mass and Cass by the executive director of the Boston Public Health Commission, Dr. Bisola Ojikutu? These combined orders released on October 19, 2021, explicitly linked the removal of “encampments” with actions aimed at “addressing public health.” In these contexts, circumstances are presented within an entanglement of goals and operations, making it difficult to discern who and or what might be the intended target.

This chapter addresses only a portion of the new procedures incited by the orders. It examines a fraction of the rhetoric encircling the measures to “address the problem of homelessness”<sup>4</sup> concentrated near the care services and emergency centers in the area commonly called Mass and Cass. However, from the language used in the executive and public health orders (echoed in recent mayoral debates), we can recognize references to both *sovereign power* and *biopolitical power*. I argue that the less-mentioned *pastoral power* connects the two. For example, by repeatedly referring to Mass and Cass (it remains fuzzy if the use of this label refers to a geographic area, a population, individual actions, or abstract representations) as a *crisis*: an “urgent crisis,” “homeless crisis,” “opiate crisis,” “humanitarian crisis,” “overlapping crisis of substance use,” “housing crisis,” “public health crisis,” and “crisis passed emergency level,” both candidates for mayor, Michelle Wu (elected mayor) and Anissa Essabi-George legitimized the necessity of taking urgent action. While they differed slightly on what steps to take, both

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<sup>4</sup> The multiplicity of productive powers camouflaged by the label of “homelessness” go beyond the limits of the operations and events mentioned in this paper. For a more extensive discussion on the specifically sociological construction of the discourse on homelessness, see Craig Willse, *The Value of Homelessness: Managing Surplus Life in the United States* (Minnesota University Press, 2015).



candidates supported the executive order and declaration of a public health emergency and, in turn, endorsed the creation and expansion of new power.

The insistence on framing entangled conditions as a “crisis” has facilitated the continued sanctioned removal and management of people and property. A host of other managerial propositions have entered into public debate: plans have been drawn by former Suffolk County Sheriff Steve Tomkins to ready a facility at the South Bay Correctional Center for treatment using involuntary commitment for a yet to be identified number of people removed from the area. Conspicuously under-referenced in the political debates was language about public safety. It is not because public safety is not part of public discourse or government policy: the Sheriff’s Department and Boston Police Departments are primary actors in deploying plans that foreground interest in public safety. Instead, I’d argue that language and rhetoric here reflect much larger processes that shape how liberal governments have come to address the paradoxes of safety and health management as mechanisms of power in response to crises.

It is worth examining two distinct descriptions of modern state power: one, political theorist Carl Schmitt’s definition modeled on sovereignty, “Sovereign is he who decides on the state of exception,” and wields emergency powers unhampered by juridical rules of law as one interpretation of postsecular state power; and two, Michel Foucault’s interpretation that the modern state acts through biopolitical powers that affect populations. In light of these descriptors, how might we interpret the ongoing political discourse surrounding the area in Boston referred to as Mass and Cass?

This chapter adds to the lexicon of theoretical concepts of power in order to more acutely analyze the power conditions acting on people experiencing homelessness in

Boston. It follows the development of “biopolitics of debility” in Jasbir Puar’s book *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, and Disability* and Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian’s description of insecure zones under surveillance in *Security Theology, Surveillance and the Politics of Fear* to provide examples of the expansive ramifications of historic procedures of biopower and pastoral power that legitimates the removal and confinement of marginalized people. The mechanisms of space and place control combined with technologies of architecture are not new and do not appear suddenly at a moment of “crisis.” Limiting analysis to the “crisis” moment covers longer and wider processes of control justified on the basis of care and safety. Michel Foucault’s definitions of biopolitics in *Security, Territory, and Population*, Alexander Weheliye’s concept of “racialized assemblages” in *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, and Mark Jordan’s interpretation of Michel Foucault’s theory Christian pastoral power help further develop these concepts. The biopolitics of debilitating enclosures and political theology of security provide new theoretical frameworks to resist the security-care apparatus supporting operations of removal under the banner of “quality of life” measures, “housing,” and “treatment.”

I focus on Foucault’s treatment of biopolitics rather than Agamben’s work on biopower, “bare life,” and “homo sacer” for practical and philosophical reasons. The authors I am reading engage with Foucault, and Weheliye explicitly develops his notion of *habeas viscus* in contrast to Agamben’s bare life centered in the figure of the *homo sacer*. Agamben’s project to develop a coherent theory of bare life tends toward a totalizing description, reducing the potential for external interventions. I do not believe Foucault set out to ignore zoe; instead, his work (prior to *Hermeneutics of Subject*)

intentionally prioritizes the techniques of everyday life and concerns itself less about the ontology of life force itself. In my reading, bare life is less of a correction or redirection of Foucault's and more of a supplementary project. While *homo sacer* initially appears to map onto experiences of homelessness, it limits the category of human, ignores the complex systemic forces that shape the conditions of homelessness, and discounts agency. Therefore, I privilege an interpretation of biopolitics that retains its porosity, emerging from my reading of Foucault. Foucault's biopolitics is well suited for an assemblage theory of power, given it was conceived of at the intersection of ordering operations (i. e. public health, forensic psychology) and surveillance systems manifested in the hospital's architecture and the prison—and connects them to their historical predecessors, the almshouse, the workhouse, quarantine, and the penitentiary.

Homelessness, a term that appears unspecified across various discourses and media, camouflages the assumptions and normalizations enacted by conceptual slippage, the subtle ways that meanings slide or shift as language moves between and across disparate spheres. This paper aims to begin to pull apart some of the interlacing power dynamics that produce the figure of homelessness, temporarily tracing the social, theopolitical, and spatial cords of a much more extensive network of apparatuses while acknowledging that these relationships quickly shift. The challenge becomes how to possibly “make sense” of the continuing entanglement of moving geopolitical, neoliberal, and ecological forces that push on multiple scales, acting simultaneously through divergent, non-continuous, yet connected processes.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> My conception of politics is heavily informed by Catherine Keller's contributions to process theology, relational ontology, and planetary ecological entanglement as well as political philosopher William Connolly's Deleuzian and Whiteheadian informed political theories. See, Catherine Keller, *The*

Foucault provides a helpful set of tools for analyzing the shifting forms of governmentality grouped under the banner of homelessness, where homelessness is increasingly used as shorthand for intersecting “social problems.” For example, in the discourse surrounding homelessness in Boston’s mayoral race, homelessness is routinely bound - either directly or through a series of code-switching and linguistic slippage - to opioid use disorder and mental health challenges. In reports from 2019-2021 of resident complaints sent to the city, complaints about trash, syringe needles, and business hardships are attached to homelessness. How might we “read” these civic practices following the logic of biopower and governmentality Foucault sets out?<sup>6</sup>

## BIOPOLITICS AND HOMELESSNESS

According to Foucault, the constructed figures of abnormality, the dangerous individual,<sup>7</sup> the freak, the abnormal, the vagabond, the idle, the insane, carry a “political history of the body”:<sup>8</sup> “The homosexual,” which, according to Foucault, in the mid-19th century “was now a species,” possessing a character and an essence. In a similar process

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*Cloud of the Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement* (Columbia University Press, 2014). William Connolly, *The Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism* (Duke University Press, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Identity-based critiques, while vital to political action - particularly in the form of intersectional analysis led by Kimberle Crenshaw Patricia Hill Collins and more recently in the area of design justice Sasha Costanza-Chock, leave non-identarian actants in the background.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975*, trans. Graham Burchell, *New York: Picador*, 2004, xix, 119. See also, Michel Foucault, “About the Concept of the “Dangerous Individual” in 19th Century Legal Psychiatry,” *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, Vol. 1, pp. 1-18, 1978 Pergamon Press. Printed in the U.S.A., translated by Alain Baudot and Jane Couchman.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975*, trans. Graham Burchell, *New York: Picador*, 2004, xix.

of figurization, “the homeless” and “homeless people” become figures with a history and a character that sticks to racialized bodies. Whereas the personage of the homosexual developed *from* sex acts performed by individuals *to* an individual with “a past...in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology.”<sup>9</sup> An individual is marked as homeless by morphology, physiology, misrecognition, and location and has come to inhabit the characteristics of irresponsibility, criminality, non-productivity and an offense to moral hygiene. The same medical establishment that focused so heavily on sexual perversions in *fin de siècle* society extended its powers to “ensure the physical vigor and moral cleanliness of the social body” (emphasis added). Moral cleanliness extended to matters of social hygiene that confined and displaced bodies living outside of permanent dwellings, upheld by the new public health police.<sup>10</sup>

“The homeless figure” similarly is abstract; it is a protean figure, a placeholder that does not represent anyone; instead, it is malleable and elastic. Therefore, it can play dual roles. It can be both an individual and a population. It can be both the receiver of health care and the dangerous individual from which society must be protected. It is stabilized through discursive histories of bodies, objects, discourses, and spaces that stick together in the language, visual representations, and stigmatizing schemas that influence politics. The politics of representation and misrecognition are significant driving forces that construct “the homeless” figure as an object of confinement.

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<sup>9</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality I*, 43.

<sup>10</sup> Foucault, *Abnormal*, 119, see also, *History of Sexuality I*, 43.

I imagine the *figure* of “the homeless individual” that populates debilitating care/control zones as it helps analyze the forms of contemporary power that share commonalities with previous eras and exhibit new tactics. I distinguish *figure* from individual as a way of highlighting the process of rhetorical figuration.<sup>11</sup> “Homeless figures,” as I use it in this paper, do not refer to material bodies, flesh, bone, and blood. Figuration destroys entangled alterity, erases worldly sensations, and blights collectives of intra-active entities.<sup>12</sup> Foucault analyzed how in the late 19th century, the concept of the ‘abnormal individual’ emerged in correlation with new apparatuses of control and surveillance. The accumulation of signs and images that create a dividual, a population of “the homeless,” shares in some of the processes that produced apparatuses for managing, normalizing, and regularizing “the large, ill-defined, and confused family of ‘abnormal individuals,’ the fear of which haunts the end of the nineteenth century.”<sup>13</sup> What can we learn from Foucault’s analysis of the confused family of abnormal individuals “when it is almost taken over by the category of ‘degeneration,’ it gives rise to laughable theoretical constructions that nonetheless have harshly real effects.”<sup>14</sup>

## POLITICAL THEOLOGY/SECURITY THEOLOGY

### *The new political theology of place*

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<sup>11</sup> I am following Sara Ahmed’s use of the concepts of figure/figuration. Ahmed’s first book, *Strange Encounters*, develops a theory of figure/figuration of “the stranger.”

<sup>12</sup> Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, (Duke University Press, 2007). The figure is that which obscures such “intercarnations” see, Catherine Keller, *Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Foucault, *Abnormal*, 323.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

According to Adam Kotsko in *Neoliberal Demons*, political theology in its “new form”<sup>15</sup> tends to hold tightly to the sovereign. Consequently, Kotsko questions the usefulness of Schmitt’s and Agamben’s political theories for critiquing neoliberal economics-politics. Political theology that centers sovereignty risks failing to account for biopolitics in a neoliberal context; however, additional attention to sovereign power, even in its democratic arrangements, helps think through “urgent” extra-legal forces or calls for exceptional actions in response to a “crisis.”<sup>16</sup> Interpreting current events and engaging in conversation with people with diverse interests and decision-making power requires critical dexterity. More conceptual tools are needed to begin to uncover infinitely complicated problems such as housing insecurity.<sup>17</sup>

Security denotes a form of power that relies on the legitimization of protection through either the logic of the sovereign (Schmitt) or the “art of governmentality” (Foucault). It can be challenging to bridge biopolitical discourse and political theology. In this section, I plan to move from “a new” political theology to a more focused “political theology of security” that incorporates insights from the biopolitical apparatus of security

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<sup>15</sup> Carl Schmitt’s *Political Theology* set out some of the key definitions that ground the new political theology framework. Adam Kotsko begins to question the usefulness of Agamben’s and Schmitt’s approaches to state power for the task of critiquing neoliberal economies.

<sup>16</sup> Saul Newman, *Political Theology: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2019), 3.

<sup>17</sup> There are clear resonances, and borrowed language, from both Foucault and Deleuze. I strategically read Foucault’s concepts framed by a conversation he had with Deleuze in “Intellectuals and Power.” Foucault, Michel and Gilles Deleuze, “Intellectuals and Power: A conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze,” 1972.

and sovereign power (as the example of political ideas rooted in theological concepts) with legal scholar Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian's theorization of "security theology."<sup>18</sup>

Suppose the sovereign in new political theology is not based on pre-modern absolutism but characterizes a response to evolving ideas of population and society from liberalism to neoliberalism. What are the opportunities for engagement between biopolitics, political theology, and the coordinated efforts that include past, present, and future architectures and urban plans? I am interested in finding insights from the biopolitics of debility and from the sovereign decisions that shape territory and create jurisdictions. Contextually, I find both processes acting on places in Boston: people living in open spaces are potential targets of the state-sanctioned apparatus of security and related architectures.

By "new" political theology, I am referring to a growing collection of writers who are responding to new forms of populism and nationalism through the lens of earlier "theological concepts that have been translated into secular language," such as "the sovereign" in Carl Schmitt's political theory.<sup>19</sup> A suggestion that political theology is "new" may seem perplexing to those who have recognized religion's role beyond the walls of the Church. Where political theology "generally refers to the interpenetration of religion and politics," it is not a claim that the political and theological have been apart all this time. It is a commentary on the forms of government and power shaping modern

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<sup>18</sup> Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Security Theology, Surveillance, and the Politics of Fear* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> Carl Schmitt, the conservative German jurist and political thinker in his 1922 book *Politische Theologie (Political Theology)* published in English as: *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (1922), trans. by G. Schwab, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005, 5. He arrived at the formulation: "Sovereign Is He Who Decides on the Exception."



states and the definition of states themselves.<sup>20</sup> It interrogates new processes characterized by neoliberal democratic influence and secularism.<sup>21, 22</sup> Catherine Keller underscores that theology has not only recently waxed political, turned progressive, “nor only recently learned to theorize the multiplicity of urgent social issues.” Instead, politically engaged theologians exist across a multiplicity of discourses.<sup>23</sup> For example, “Ecofeminist and ecowomanist theologies of relation, have for nearly half a century constructed transdisciplinary intersections between the political, the ecological, and the discourse of the ultimate.”<sup>24</sup> Systematic theologian Rubén Rosario Rodríguez’s edited volume *T & T Clark Handbook of Political Theology* exhibits the breadth of scholarship representing the diversity of political theology. It includes essays on post-Holocaust theologies, liberation theology in Latin America and the Black Church, comparative theology, and Christian social ethics. Theology engaged in political thought complicates the narrative that “religion seems to have ‘returned to the public sphere...and now seriously threatens the secular political space.’”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Newman, *Political Theology: A Critical Introduction*, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Slavoj Žižek, Eric L. Santner, and Kenneth Reinhard. *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*, Chicago University Press, 2006, 2013, 14. “Second, Schmitt claims that the essential logic of the political lies in the opposition between the categories of ‘friend’ and ‘enemy.’” Slavoj Žižek, Eric L. Santner, and Kenneth Reinhard. *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*, Chicago University Press, 2006, 2013, 14.

<sup>22</sup> Catherine Keller, *Political Theology of the Earth: Our Planetary Emergency and the Struggle for a New Public* (Columbia University Press, 2018), 12-13.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Newman, *Political Theology: A Critical Introduction*, 8-9, 12.

Political theology makes the argument for the theological foundations of political theory.<sup>26</sup> It is part political philosophy, part social theory, but not *necessarily* concerned with theological explications. So, writing about political theology from a theological entry point complicates its definition. Transdisciplinary political theology often becomes muddled around the God-sovereign pair. For there to be some agreement on the terms secularization and sovereignty, it is implied that they would rely on privileging a historical and political framework, which marginalizes other theologically informed interpretations of God's sovereignty. Otherwise, we would have difficulty even agreeing on the word "post-secular" to further the discussion between politics and religion. That limitation contributes to some misinterpretations of sovereign power.

#### *Security, territory, and political theology*

Despite a proliferation of political theologies, Kotsko perceives a "stark divide between sovereignty and biopolitics."<sup>27</sup> In Schmitt's view, a modern leader cannot be an absolute sovereign - whose authority is legitimized innately by the sovereign and who wields divine, omnipotent power. Transformed in evolving liberal frameworks, the sovereign receives authority from society rather than from the Church. However, some new political theology scholars are embracing a Foucauldian theorization of power. The conceptualization of political theology shaped during the ascension of liberalism in

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<sup>26</sup> Schmitt famously wrote in *Political Theology*, "All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development - in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent god became the omnipotent lawgiver - but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts" (*Political Theology*, 1922).

<sup>27</sup> Adam Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons: On the Political Theology of Late Capital* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018).

Europe opens textual dialogue with Foucault's lectures on the emergence of governmentality after the French Revolution.<sup>28</sup>

For Kotsko, Foucault's theories allow for more articulations of contemporary practices of power than political theology, which tends to have an overdetermined focus on sovereignty. *Neoliberal Demons* uses Foucault's interconnected notion of power to critique neoliberalism in its current form more adequately:

Foucauldianism already represents a nonreductionist approach to the interplay of discursive, political, and economic forces...and in contrast to conventional political theology's animus against the economic, he includes economic practices and techniques alongside the many other modes in which power is exercised....Foucauldianism provides a model for my general theory of political theology.<sup>29</sup>

Foucault's theories help Kotsko correct what he sees to be an artificially narrow emphasis on the autonomy and necessity of the state<sup>30</sup> that limits one's ability to critique the political-economic exchange that characterizes neoliberalism.<sup>31</sup> The division need not be as stark if we revisit Foucault's discussion of sovereign power and the development of liberalism in Europe. Foucault lectures more about neoliberalism in its French, German, and American form in his lectures *The Birth of Biopolitics*, which he gave the year after *Security, Territory, and Population*. Future work would include a discussion of the lectures from 1978-79. Still, here I focus on *territory* to highlight his work's spatial

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<sup>28</sup> I am parsing out a version of political theology that connects at moments to my interest in biopolitics; I am not attempting a full description of the field, nor am I attempting a correction.

<sup>29</sup> Kotsko, *Neoliberal's Demons*, ch. 2.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

implications and argue that territory and space overlap in biopower and sovereign power, allowing for more dialogue between biopolitics and political theology.

*Foucault deals with sovereignty*

Using Foucault's biopolitics to theorize political theology does not exclude thinking about sovereign power. Foucault did not forget about sovereign power. He routinely insists it should not be ignored or overlooked in a thorough analysis of power.<sup>32</sup> The prince rules over a territory, marked, occupied, and surveilled through mobility, circulation, and communication technologies. Therefore, one could offer another definition of the sovereign: the sovereign is who or what traces the borders of a territory. Trace is both a concrete and an abstract means of establishing a territory over which the sovereign rules. Through the concept of territory, sovereign power and biopolitics meet.

The focus on new biopolitics may have distracted him from his critical questions on the shifting techniques of governing. In his following year's lectures, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault expressed that he was more committed to articulating the "art of governmentality" rather than biopolitics itself.<sup>33</sup> The formation of governmentality slowly took form "in which the behavior of a set of individuals became involved, more and more markedly, in the exercise of sovereign power."<sup>34</sup> Foucault spent some time tracking the development of sovereign power. His argument for reducing the central focus of the

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<sup>32</sup> Foucault significantly describes sovereign power in his lectures *Security, Territory, and Population*.

<sup>33</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. Edited by Michel Senellart. Translated by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> Michel Foucault, trans. Rabinow, P., *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (New York: New Press, 1997), 68.

juridical basis of sovereign power does not mean he was unconcerned with sovereignty.

In Foucault's telling, the prince finds new forms of ruling that do not continue to be based on religion's virtues and ordained authority; "the reason of the state" and not "the will of the sovereign" increasingly participates in the practices of power.<sup>35</sup>

The relationship between sovereignty, security, and power can interpret *territory*. The center of state power was defined initially in terms of geographic location, exhibited in the strategic positioning of the capital in the center of a territory. Later, state power was elaborated to include circulation. The movement of people, troops, trade, and disease as they circulated through the domain. In *Security, Territory, and Population*, Foucault writes, "Ultimately...and this is both an old idea, since it is a matter of sovereignty, and a modern idea, since it involves circulation - is the superimposition of the state of sovereignty, the territorial state, and the commercial state. It involves fastening them together and mutually reinforcing them."<sup>36</sup> Sovereign powers can be described as either a state of exception, a center of decision making, the authority to create and suspend laws, or the power and duty to sustain their subjects. These definitions would be incomplete without adding "within a territory," where territory is both material and abstract.

Strikingly missing from Schmitt's definition of the sovereign in *Political Theology* is the mention of territory. I find this omission particularly curious given that the sovereign, for Schmitt, is itself a border concept, having a double vision, inward toward the rule of law and outward toward the exception. I would think the reliance on border conceptualization of sovereign power would be reflected in the theorization of

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, 69. Assets and risks calculate the population-depopulation problem.

<sup>36</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, and Population*, 15.

borders and territory. Territory does become a crucial component of his concept of the sovereign later in *Nomos of the Earth*. He states that sovereign power held by the state and the "new international order" relies on the idea of territory and the maintenance of a border, both internally and externally.<sup>37</sup> After *Political Theology*, he writes, "All political conflicts can be reduced to territorial conflicts, and this entails that all conflicts can in principle be contained as long as it is possible to divide the territory in a way that will allow both groups to maintain their form of life."<sup>38</sup>

Tracing or watching over the border ensures that a territory exists; surveillance creates the edge itself by watching over its defense, its penetration, verticalization in the form of a wall, or mapping its contours: the will and the eye of the sovereign carves the territory. But as sovereign power changes with the development of biopower, territory changes with it.

You can describe sovereignty as the holder of power, the sovereign, God, prince, or the measure or rule of authority. Still, it must be recognized for the sovereign to exist; rather than dream of power, it must be recognized. That recognition is bound to a territory. The rule of law depends on the territory, on jurisdictions - "we speak only of its claims and exercise of sovereignty over them when they return within its own territorial jurisdiction, and not of its rights to compel or require obedience to such laws on the part

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<sup>37</sup> I do not have adequate space to give more evidence of how Schmitt derived at a place where territory becomes the essential conceptual category for political interpretations of conflict between friend and enemy. Vinx Lars summarizes part "War as a Relation Among Equally Sovereign Persons" and "The Comprehensive Spatial Order."

<sup>38</sup> Carl Schmitt and G L. Ulmen, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (New York: Telos Press, 2003), 143–8. Vinx, Lars, "Carl Schmitt," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL =

of other nations, within their own territorial sovereignty.”<sup>39</sup> The rule of law existed for people and places *within a given territory*. Territory is a shifting concept along with sovereignty but the two influence one another.

Foucault makes clear in his lectures that biopower did not so much "replace" sovereign power as participate in the political transformations altering European governance throughout the 19th century. Specifically, he describes how sovereignty was impacted by psychological and legal modifications during this period.<sup>40</sup> Biopower emerged alongside these changes rather than entirely supplanting sovereign rule. It was one facet of evolving forms of control as new regimes of power supplemented older structures, not a categorical substitution. What was the change that took place? For Foucault, concrete analysis of power would have to resist making “law the fundamental manifestation of power” and instead “think about power in terms of force relations.”<sup>41</sup> One would need to expand the understanding of power.<sup>42</sup> In *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault advocates abandoning the strictly legalistic conceptualization of sovereignty

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<sup>39</sup> Alberto Burdett, Rich William, and Mark McKinney, “Ruling Case Law Vol XV, Jurisdiction of Persons, 1917” (Facsimile Publisher, 2015).  
[https://www.google.com/books/edition/Ruling\\_Case\\_Law/onNKAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Ruling_Case_Law/onNKAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1)

<sup>40</sup> In his lecture mode, Foucault’s thought expresses porosity, contradiction, and fragmentation. I have found this to be a characteristic that is well suited for the framing of contemporary events such as Operation Clean Sweep.

<sup>41</sup> Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (The New York Press, 1997), 59. Full lectures published as *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975-76*. New York: Picador, 2003 in *Ethics, Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975-76*. New York: Picador, 2003, 59.

<sup>42</sup> Since Deleuze wrote “Postscript on the Societies of Control” in 1990, there is an assumption that control societies with characteristic techno-global reach and virtual connections replaced disciplinary forms of order and therefore theories of sovereign societies and disciplinary societies have outlived their relevance. These mechanisms may be unmistakable, but they may no longer appear in the same forms, but in combinations or in micropolitics.

that had come to define it. By this, he seeks to move beyond the exclusively juridical notion of sovereign power as state authority. Rather, he insists on reformulating how statehood is understood to also incorporate emergent modalities of security derived from biopolitics.<sup>43</sup>

The course description of *Security, Territory, and Population* explained that the year-long course was meant to explore the “notion of population” and the “mechanisms capable of ensuring its regulation.”<sup>44</sup> Foucault asks, “Was there a transition from the sovereign state to the population state?” His unqualified answer is “No.” There “was not a replacement but, rather, a shift of accent and the appearance of new objectives, and hence of new problems and new techniques.”<sup>45</sup> He explains, “Rather than looking for the single form of power...one must first let them stand forth in their multiplicity...study them therefore as relations of force that intersect, interrelate, converge, or, on the contrary, oppose one another or tend to cancel each other out.”<sup>46</sup>

### Enclosing Populations

If a population, demographically and biologically, is conceived as a “mass of human arms intended for labor,” then a Marxist explanation would be adequate. If a population is designed as a collection of legal subjects, an analysis of sovereign juridical power would be appropriate. But suppose a population follows Foucault’s argument that

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<sup>43</sup> Foucault, “Society Must Be Defended” in *Ethics*, 59.

<sup>44</sup> Foucault’s course description was written at the completion of him giving the lectures.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*



it is conceived as more than a collection of human beings. In that case, its new conception may offer purchase for “concerted interventions (through laws, but also through changes of attitude, of ways of acting and living that can be obtained through ‘campaigns’).”<sup>47</sup> Population becomes something else as sovereign power shifts and governmentality develops. Population names something different than previously existed; it meant to name a set of sociohistorical-political epistemologies and accompanying processes; “So there begins to appear, branching off from the technology of ‘policy’ and in correlation with the birth of economic thought, the political problem of population.”<sup>48</sup>

The *Security, Territory, and Population* lectures

identified *Polizeiwissenschaft*<sup>49</sup> as one of its targets of analysis. In the eighteenth century, according to Foucault, this theory developed in Germany from the idea that the power of the state is affirmed and increased to maintain “order and discipline, the regulations that tend to make their [subjects] lives comfortable and to provide them with the thing they need for their livelihood.”<sup>50</sup>

And the management of this population required, among other things, a health policy capable of diminishing infant mortality, preventing epidemics, and bringing down the rates of endemic diseases, of intervening in living conditions in order to alter them and impose standards on them (whether this involved nutrition, housing, or urban planning). And of ensuring adequate medical facilities and devices. The development, starting in the second half of the eighteenth century, of what was called *medizinische Polizei*, public health, or social medicine, must be written back in the general framework of a ‘biopolitics’; the latter tends to treat

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<sup>47</sup> Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* in *Ethics*, 70

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Two specific studies during the year lectures are of note for the role architecture, and urban played in the developed, the “notion of *Polizeiwissenschaft*... on the Paris cholera epidemic in 1832 . . . and the development of insurance in the nineteenth century.”

<sup>50</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, and Population* in *Ethics*, 70.

the 'population' as a mass of living and coexisting beings who present particular biological pathological traits and who thus come under specified knowledge and technologies. And the 'biopolitics' itself must be understood in terms of a theme developed as early as the seventeenth century: the management of state forces.<sup>51</sup>

Foucault shifts the focus of attention from the identification of power's seat, "it would be better to try and identify the different techniques of constraint that it brings into play."<sup>52</sup> Biopolitics came to act on this new concept of collectivity that emerged within a notion of governmental policy and formed practices of living.

*Surveillance, pastoral power, and the politics of care*

Foucault offered Bentham's panopticon as the chief example of disciplinary control. The English word discipline has an aggressive connotation. When paired with the word punish in the translated title of Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, disciplinary power fails to capture the potential reach and subtle forms of surveillance, both analog (as in the architecture of the panopticon and the hospital) and digital, the original French title does, *Surveiller et punir : Naissance de la prison*.<sup>53</sup> *Surveiller* means to oversee or watch from above is closely associated with *survey* - measuring the land in detail. They share the Latin *sur*, which means super or over, with *sovereign*.<sup>54</sup> Surveillance combines the gaze (affective tracking) with a legitimized purpose (authorized role - the ruler bestowed with authority to make the extra-legal

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<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, 71.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, 59.

<sup>53</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan, Penguin Books, 1977.

<sup>54</sup> Etymology Online Database, <https://www.etymonline.com/>.

decision.)<sup>55</sup> Legal and political philosopher Jeremy Bentham was obsessed with achieving a politically all-seeing gaze. He borrowed the panopticon design from his brother, Samuel, an engineer and naval architect, to construct an architectural<sup>56</sup> surveillance tool. Simone Browne, in *Dark Matters: The Surveillance of Blackness*, notes, “Pan, in Greek mythology, is the god of shepherds and flocks, the name derived from *paion*, meaning ‘pasture’ and hinting at the root word of ‘pastoral,’ and in this way the prefix pan- gestures toward pastoral power.” Ben Golder calls the split concern of the shepherd over a flock (society) each sheep (individual) in a relationship in which the fate of the sheep and the flock is tied to the duty and salvation of the shepherd, the “pastoral-paradox.”<sup>57</sup> In the political debates that featured religiously based prison reform, Bentham situated his plans in what surveillance theorist David Lyon calls “secular omniscience.”<sup>58</sup> Bentham’s referring to an all-seeing gaze brings to mind “God’s eye view,” an all-seeing, omniveillant gaze. Lyon offers welcome clarification during his discussion of surveillance; omniscience in the form of Bentham’s surveillance should not be confused with theological interpretations of God. But Foucault’s description of omnipresent power begs political and theological questions about ontological experiences of power. Pastoral power appears in *Security, Territory, and Population* as a reading of

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<sup>55</sup> See, Foucault, “Eye of Power,” 151.

<sup>56</sup> Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: Surveillance of Blackness* (Duke University Press, 2015), 34-35.

<sup>57</sup> Ben Golder, “Foucault and the Genealogy of Pastoral Power: A Review of *Security, Territory, and Population*,” 2007.

<sup>58</sup> David Lyon, “God’s Eye View: Surveillance and the Eye of God,” *Studies in Christian Ethics*, January 15, 2014. Volume: 27 issue: 1: 21-32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0953946813509334>.

the parable of the lost sheep, but Foucault does not significantly develop it in his subsequent work.<sup>59</sup> I'd like to write more about the paucity of political-theological interpretations of Foucault's notion of Christian pastoral power. Confessions of the flesh, Foucault's later treatment of Christian power, has more scholarly engagement. Biopolitics moves to the foreground of his lectures before turning to *the subject* in his later works. Pastoral power may not simply be an "ancient form of power," as Foucault claimed. Mark Jordan hinted, it may not be the forerunner to liberal governing, but it may not singularly be a pre-modern conception of power. I'd be interested in revisiting it as a form of power that migrated to the arena of Christian charity, almshouses, which became the models of social work and philanthropy, which is so central in the biopolitics of homelessness, mental health, and substance use disorder. A more extended discussion about the forms pastoral power takes in the contemporary management of a population and its individuals might offer more opportunities for a theological-political approach to the biopolitics of debility.

Bentham sought to solve a population problem. Foucault writes, "Like [Bentham's] contemporaries, he faced the problem of the accumulation of men." You cannot separate issues of population and oversight. He poses the problem of visibility "but thinks of a visibility organized entirely around a dominating, overseeing gaze."<sup>60</sup> The panopticon was inspired by the glassed-in cell inside the hospital where the patient "could be observed throughout the night without being able to have the slightest contact

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<sup>59</sup> Mark Jordan, *Convulsing Bodies: Religion and Resistance in Foucault* (Stanford University Press, 2014), 130-132.

<sup>60</sup> Foucault, "The Eye of Power," 152.

with his fellows.”<sup>61</sup> The hospital was the architectural master of observation and “Doctors were, along with the military, the first managers of collective space.”<sup>62</sup> The model of surveillance was thus the product of Bentham’s population problems meeting architectural solutions: “questions of density and proximity, or between men and things, the question of water, sewage, ventilation, or between men and animals, the questions of stables and abattoirs, or between men and the dead, the question of cemeteries”<sup>63</sup> “The point,” for Foucault, “is that architecture begins at the end of the eighteenth century to become involved in problems of population, health and the urban question. Previously, the art of building corresponded to the need to make power, divinity and might manifest.”<sup>64</sup>

In contrast to the spectacle of punishment, “you have the system of surveillance, which on the contrary involves very little expense,” economically or politically. This is a successful formula: “power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost.”<sup>65</sup> This formula conveniently solves the problem of liberalism’s justification of governance (reduction of political cost) and neoliberalism’s unquestioned pursuit of the reason of value maximization (reduction of economic cost and extraction).

*Penitentiary, Almshouse, Workhouse*

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<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, 147.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, 151.

<sup>63</sup> Foucault, “The Eye of Power,” 147.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, 148.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, 155.

In *The Fabrication of Virtue: English Prison Architecture 1750-1840*, architecture historian Robin Evans explores how ideals of virtue influenced the architectural planning of public buildings, churches, and early prisons in England. Architecture was used to shape materials, measurements, and order in the pursuit of reform agendas. During the Enlightenment, Christian piety and rationalistic psychology combined to form an amalgamation that shaped the prison, where sanctification and behavioral modification were the goals of the reform process.<sup>66</sup> Evans argues that the technologies of moral formation did not disappear with the development of modern prisons; they expanded beyond the prison walls and informed many aspects of governmentality. This supports Foucault's theory of governmentality and his description of panopticism, which will be discussed more directly in the next chapter.

The penitentiary was, indeed as the name suggests, connected with Christian ideas of penitence. Pastoral power included intentional reflection on why and how to imprison an individual to work toward the salvation of the individual and the community to whom the person was meant to return. The theorization of individual cells that could be centrally watched, such as the one Bentham theorized, took its distinct form “To reform them they had been submitted to complete isolation; but this absolute solitude...is beyond the strength of man, ... it does not reform, it kills.”<sup>67</sup> “Unmitigated solitude” was more influenced by prison reformers’ pastoral power, such as William Strickland who designed the Pittsburgh Penitentiary in Pennsylvania in 1827 as biopower.<sup>68</sup> Evans does not set out

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<sup>66</sup> Robin Evans, *The Fabrication of Virtue: English Prison Architecture 1750-1840* (First paperback edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 393.

<sup>67</sup> Evans, *The Fabrication of Virtue*, 393-4

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, 318.

to trace Foucault's theories of power, but his unique approach to architectural history in *Fabrication of Virtue* uncovers the confluence of biopolitics and pastoral power. By following architectural trails, Evans arrives at comparable understandings, as when he observes that "new varieties of institutions were constructed with the expectation that humanity might progress towards greater perfection through modes of governance structured by meticulously arranged built forms."<sup>69</sup> Whereas biopolitics draws connections between places through analogous techniques of control, pastoral power, in this context, materialized through constructions like almshouses and workhouses in 17th-18th century Boston. John M. Bryan explains a commonly held conviction among politicians "that architectural design and social reform are indissolubly wedded..." As a building type and as a "place of detention promoting moral reform in lieu of corporal punishment, the prison may be viewed as a result of the impact of humanism upon architectural theory and practice."<sup>70</sup> Evans' research, as corroborated by Bryant, underscores how the merging of redemptive and reformatory goals manifested in structured physical settings, reflecting enduring beliefs about architecture's capacity to cultivate virtue.

*Site Inspections, and Building Recommendations*

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<sup>69</sup> Evans, *The Fabrication of Virtue*, 394.

<sup>70</sup> John M. Bryan, "Robert Mills, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Thomas Jefferson, and the South Carolina Penitentiary Project, 1806-1808," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Jan. 1984, Vol. 85, No. 1 (Jan., 1984), pp. 1-21.

In one of the earliest sociological studies on almshouses in the United States, Alexander Johnson <sup>71</sup> traces the histories of “poor relief” and almshouses reflect the changing sentiments and laws directed toward the poor. These histories continued in various forms. For example, “In New England, the terms overseer of the poor, settlement, chargeable, able-bodied and idle poor would persist well into the 20th century.”<sup>72</sup>

Along with explaining the reasons for the increase in poverty and homelessness, Alexander makes design recommendations for the almshouses. The section includes architectural guides for:

1. Choice of site
2. Size and capacity
3. Building plans
4. Building materials
5. Heating, Lighting, Ventilation;
6. The Administration, employees, and inspectors;
7. Classes admitted; Admission; Classification; Rules; Discipline; Complaints; Occupation and Labor;

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<sup>71</sup> Almshouse was a common term for workhouse, poorhouse, county infirmary, city home, county hospital, county asylum. Johnson, 7

Alexander Johnson, *The Almshouse: Construction and Management*, The Russell Sage Foundation, 1911.

<sup>72</sup> Michael J. Clarke, “Newton’s Almshouses 1731 - 1964,” Mike Clarke, 2015, 3.



8. The Bath and Personal Cleanliness; Institution Odor; separation of the sick, consumptives, and mental defectives.<sup>73</sup>

A well-managed, comfortable almshouse is a preventive of unnecessary pauperism. Those who really need public care can have it there, and those who do not need it will not seek it there. An ill-kept, disorderly almshouse, without proper classification of inmates, without thorough discipline and order, without efficient control over those whom it feeds and clothes, and without any permanence in its relations to the degenerates among those for whom it cares, may be not only a cause of dire waste of public funds, but will inevitably promote and increase pauperism and degeneracy and all the human ills that come from them.<sup>74</sup>

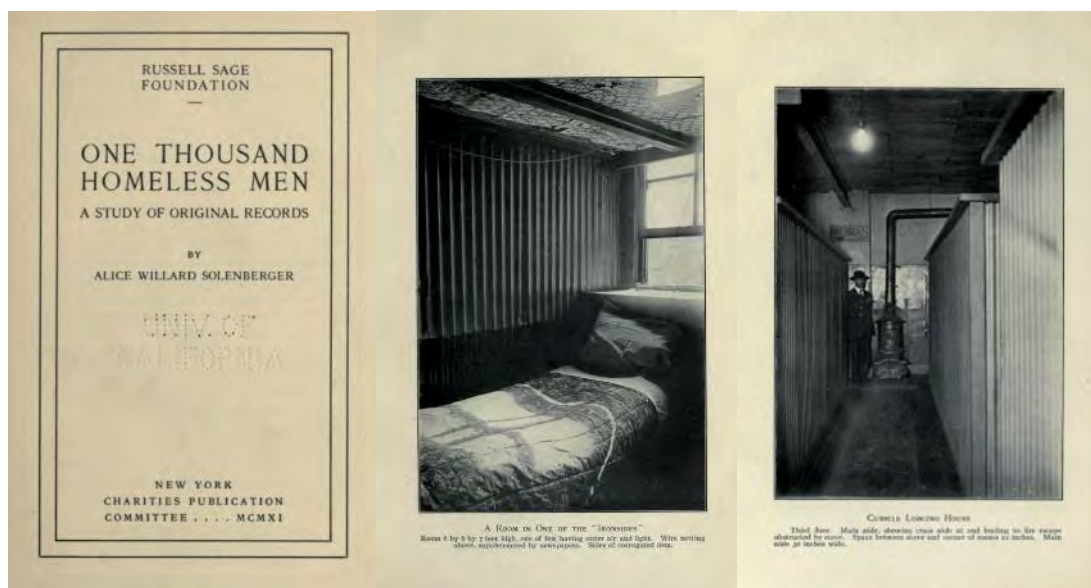
Almshouses were places for mixed habitation, and up until the 20th century, almshouses included the ill, indigent, homeless, delinquent, disabled, alcoholic, insane and ‘feeble-minded.’”<sup>75</sup>

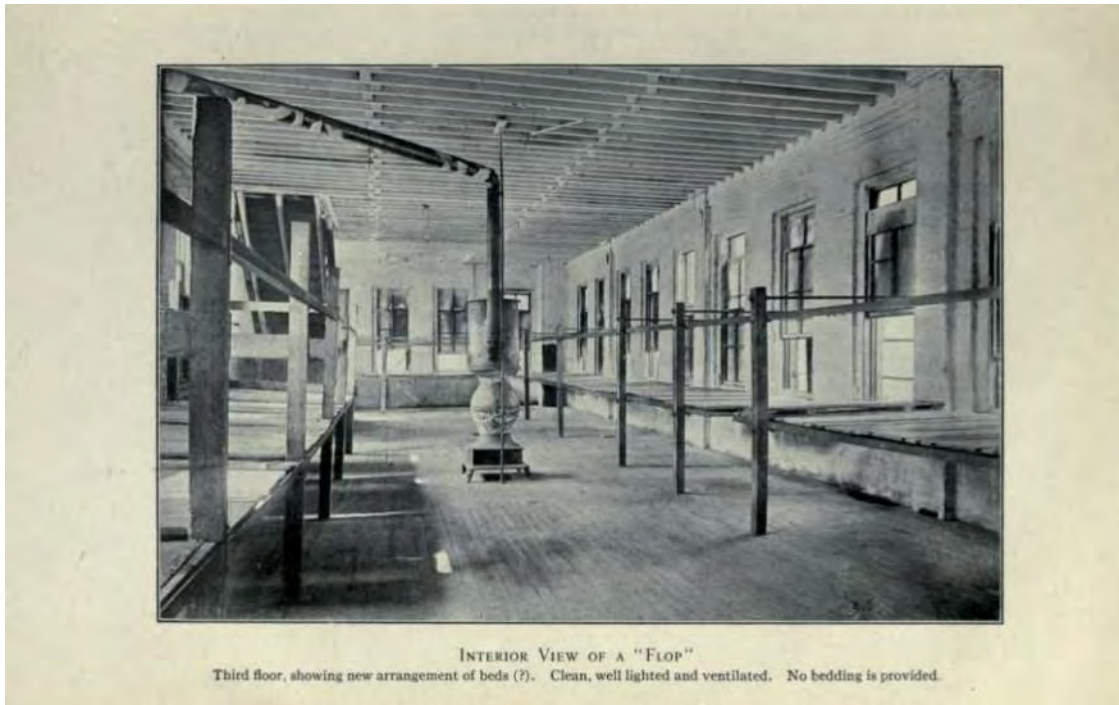
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<sup>73</sup> Johnson. As a warning to the state of the almshouses’ mismanagement, Johnson included an appendix titled: *Evils of Promiscuous Mingling of Classes in the Almshouse: Extract from the Minority Report of the British Poor Law Commission, 1909.*, 141.

<sup>74</sup> Johnson, *The Almshouse*, 2.

<sup>75</sup> Clarke, “Newton’s Almshouses,” 3.





INTERIOR VIEW OF A "FLOP"  
Third floor, showing new arrangement of beds (?). Clean, well lighted and ventilated. No bedding is provided.

Figure 43 Fig. Interior photographs published in "One Thousand Homeless Men," Russell Sage Foundation, 1911.



Figure 44 “Friends’ Alms-House” was constructed in 1745 by the Religious Society of Friends, Quakers.

## DEBILITATING INFRASTRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONS: BEYOND THE CONFINES OF BUILDINGS

### Debility and Biopolitics: The right to make live, make die, and injure<sup>76</sup>

Debilitating security regimes employ aligned tactics that operate through techno-infrastructural mechanisms within a framework of shared logic. Analyzing the biopolitics of debilitating spatial and material assemblies reveals philosophical, theological, and political roots of homelessness management.

<sup>76</sup> Jasbir Puar creates a valuable model for the interpretation of events connected to both “Operation Clean Sweep” and former acting Boston Mayor Kim Janey’s Executive Order that “declared that the substance use disorder, unsheltered homelessness, and related issues in the City of Boston constitute a public health crisis.” An analysis of either race or disability cannot adequately cover the combined concerns referenced in this executive order. Puar’s additional category of *debility* extends the potential analytical frames for interrogating current contexts.

I am persuaded by Puar's argument in *The Right to Maim* that debility-capacity (rather, death-life is parallel) is a distinctly effective "conceptual vector." Violence aimed to injure cannot be captured within the poles of life and death traced by biopolitics (unmodified) or necropolitics. Puar introduces debility as a temporospatial conceptual correlative within biopolitics which neither life nor death can accommodate.<sup>77</sup> Achille Mbembe describes necropolitics, "the right to kill and let live," as an inversion of biopolitics, "the right to make live or let die," and thereby makes a valuable intervention in biopolitical research that centers race. Necropolitics' focus on death (and its opposite pole, life) fails to adequately account for forms of power that do not have either life or death as their aim but instead act with "the right to maim."

Second, Puar argues that the relationship of debility to disability theory need not be confrontational. Although discourses of disability/ability undoubtedly shape an analysis of homeless issues, it cannot be reduced to rigid categories of disability or illness, which depend on shifting characterizations determined primarily within medical-legal frameworks. Collapsing homelessness into any singular issue risks obscuring the interlocking systems of power that map alongside intersectional identities and interjurisdictional governance.

And finally, the concept of debility subverts the prioritizing of identity through a third criterion: the spatiotemporal elements of the built environment register as affect, not

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<sup>77</sup> Puar positions her theorization of debility and capacitation power as an outside intersecting third vector that intercepts the quadrant of life and death characterized by the biopolitical "make live" or "let die" and the sovereign "let live" or "make die." Because the right to kill and the right to give life do not account for the complexity of endemic harm, a focus on debility could help show how accountability and responsibility for violence are elusive because the injurious act is often disarticulated from harm.

identity; therefore, the material characteristics of the built environment become vital elements in a nonrepresentational assemblage informed analysis of politics.<sup>78</sup>

The goal of state power is not always located along the sliding line between life and death; life or death is the ultimate end. For Puar, the “Right to maim exemplifies that death is not the only aim.”<sup>79</sup> The right to maim is an unofficial but institutionalized form of security that Puar theorizes to account for security practices that resonate from Ferguson, Missouri, to the West Bank. “The right to maim” is the epitome of the shift from a form of violence that aims to kill, to one that aims to keep alive, but with reduced capacity than what is generally covered by “life,” given that health and mobility are intentionally targeted and reduced. Puar explains that a single body can, and often is, both disabled and debilitated in unequal ways by powers over life, mobility, and recognition. Debilitation is a category that captures material, spatial, and affective forms of trauma that can compound experiences of disability. How can we give attention to the affects and effects of debilitating state practices that function with a logic of collateral damage?<sup>80</sup>

*The Right to Maim* grounds theory in the events of Operation Protective Edge:

I noted a complementary logic long present in Israeli tactical calculations of settler colonial rule - that of creating injury and maintaining Palestinian populations as perpetually debilitated, and yet alive, in order to control them. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have shown a demonstrable pattern over decades of sparing life, of shooting to maim rather than kill. This is ostensibly a humanitarian practice, leaving many civilians ‘permanently disabled’ in an occupied territory of destroyed hospitals, rationed medical supplies, and scarce resources. This pattern appeared again during Operation Protective Edge; the number of civilian casualties was reported daily and justified through the logic of collateral damage,

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<sup>78</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*, 342.

<sup>79</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*, xviii.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.* 48.

while the number of injuries was rarely commented upon and never included in reflections of the daily toll of the siege.<sup>81</sup>

Puar claims that "the right to maim" is the debilitating operation par excellence.<sup>82</sup>

Because the Israeli military claims injuring Palestinian populations is a restrained response to a threat - situated in risk assessment and protectionist security logic - the response is justified. Puar argues that these injurious actions are more palatable within a liberal framework. Liberal constitution tolerates injury more than a focus on death would allow. The correlative data translates into debilitating injuries obscured by media reports of lower death counts. Within the larger scheme of neoliberal humanitarian security framework, which I argue describes the United States, the more deaths reported, the less tolerant liberal societies will be of violence. Her argument reflects Foucault's theorization of biopolitics and its relationship to liberalism that developed in France in the late 19th century.

Media representations of life/death obscure the impact of injuring bodies by counting them among "collateral damage" and reify the marking of Palestinian people as both injured and available for injury. The practice of shooting to cripple, rather than to kill, while keeping casualties low makes some results of war appear unintentional. However, they are predictable. Collateral damage is less reported and seen as inevitable. The articulated humanitarian liberal conceptualizations of the subject guide institutional efforts to seek out disabled bodies to become available for capacitation through

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<sup>81</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*, x.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*



rehabilitation.<sup>83</sup> The same processes rarely mobilize a response to collective bodies debilitated by racist machination.

Debility is attached to the lexicon of biopolitical theorization. Debility accounts for the hidden violence against bodies within a security logic that claims the right to maim. Accountability and responsibility for violence are elusive because violent acts are often disarticulated from harm. Who is slated for injury? Mainly when the temporal difference in the process of debilitation Lauren Berlant describes as "slow death."<sup>84</sup> Time itself possesses debilitating capacities. Berlant's theorizing of affective time moves away from the event or crisis and thinks in terms of stretching and slowing "temporalities of the endemic" that, for Puar, are situated between life and death. Puar positions her theorization of debility and capacitation power as an outside intersecting third vector that intercepts the quadrant of life and death characterized by the biopolitical "make live" or "let die" and the sovereign "let live" or "make die." Because the right to kill and the right to give life do not account for the complexity of endemic harm.

Debility "marks the convergence of capitalism and slow death via its enfolding into neoliberalism." Disability has traditionally been shaped by paternalism and guardianship. The disabled body is characterized as an object of charity and religious obligation. Shielding occupation. Here Puar helps to center the hidden logic of dueling powers that operate on care and security, describing "neoliberal biomedical circuits" and "neoliberal alibis" as rights based endowments of individual liberties.<sup>85</sup> Puar's work can

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<sup>83</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*, xxi.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, 1, 11.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, xx.



be viewed as a supplement to a collection of scholarship furthering the discourse of the biopolitics of disability, such as David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder's *The Biopolitics of Disability*, Robert McRuer's "Disability Nationalism in Crip Times," and Ben Moshe, Chris Chapman, and Allison Carey's *Disability Incarcerated*.<sup>86</sup>

The state often instrumentalizes the category of disability through labor and productivity. For example, the lack of affordable healthcare and limited investment in under-resourced communities, and the contexts that "caretakers of people with disabilities often come from chronically disenfranchised populations that endure debilities themselves."<sup>87</sup>

Conceptually, state, medical, and other forms of recognition of disability may shroud debilities and forms of slow death while also effacing the quotidian modalities of widescale debilitation so prevalent due to capitalist exploitation and imperialist expansion, in my usage, debility signals precisely the temporospatial frame eclipsed by toggling between exceptionalizing disability and exceptional disability: the endemic. Relational forms of capitalism, care, and racialization inform an assemblage of disability to a constellation of debilities and capacities. ...Debility is thus a crucial complication of the neoliberal transit of disability rights. Debility addresses injury and bodily exclusion that are endemic rather than epidemic or exceptional and reflects a need for rethinking overarching structures of working, schooling, and living rather than relying on rights frames to provide accommodationist solutions. Challenging liberal disability rights frames, debility not only elucidates what is left out of disability imaginaries and rights politics; it also illuminates constitutive absences necessary for capacitating

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<sup>86</sup> David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, eds. *The Biopolitics of Disability: Neoliberalism, Ablenationalism, and Peripheral Embodiment* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015).

Robert McRuer, "Disability Nationalism in Crip Times," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, Volume 4, Number 2, (2010): pp. 163-178.

Liat Ben-Moshe, Chris Chapman, and Allison C. Carey, eds. *Imprisonment and Disability in the United States and Canada*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

<sup>87</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*, xvi.

discourses of disability empowerment, pride, visibility and inclusion take shape.<sup>88</sup>

Debility does not dissolve disability into itself; rather “disability and debility can be thought of as two concepts describing similar phenomena under late capitalism with strikingly different effects and entangled political limitations and possibilities.”<sup>89</sup>

Puar is careful to avoid positioning the biopolitics of debility as an alternative to the biopolitics of disability. She does not discount disability studies, crip theory, and certainly not disability activism but alternatively creates new forms of critique previously undertheorized as neoliberal state powers. Puar does not move beyond disability - eliding, correcting, or perfecting it along the way - rather, she seeks to extend, reinforce, and supplement the complex theorization of disability. Rather than attempting to define disability, she asks, “Who has a greater risk to become disabled?”<sup>90</sup>

### Racialized assemblages

Puar notes important criticisms posed to Foucault's work because of his light treatment of race and the lack of direct engagement with colonialism; Alexander Weheliye gives extended attention in *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*.<sup>91</sup>

In *Habeas Viscus*, Weheliye argues that bare life and biopolitical discourse equate the human with “absolute biological matter,” which discloses the humanity of racialized

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<sup>88</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*, xvi - xvii.

<sup>89</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*., 1-2.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, xv, xix, 25.

<sup>91</sup> Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Duke University Press, 2014).

subjects consigned to personhood-as-ownership. The internal failure of biopolitics sans race theorization positions a complete subject that is anterior to race and fails to adequately account for how race and racism shape the modern concept of the human. Weheliye insists on black studies that point out the essential role “racialized assemblages” play in the development of the modern human, which does not recognize other forms of life as part of the category Man. When “black people appear as either nonhuman or magically hyperhuman within the universe of Man, black subjects are imbued with either a surplus (hyperfemininity or hypermasculinity) of gender and sexuality or a complete lack thereof (desexualization).”<sup>92</sup>

His theorization continues to be generative because of its positioning at the points of contact and cross-fertilization of genealogies of knowledge. It also remains available to a theorization of disability and debility because “Foucault's frame of biopolitics is intrinsically dedicated to variations of bodily health and vulnerability. In *Security, Territory, and Population*, he details the different regimes of power associated with distinct illnesses.”<sup>93</sup>

The lack of adequate theorization of race limits the transposability of biopolitics as a conceptual tool. There must be additional language beyond biopolitics to develop a critical lens to address racializing systems. The assumption is that Agamben’s and Foucault’s concepts are transposable “to a variety of spatiotemporal contexts.”<sup>94</sup> However, *Habeas Viscus* addresses Agamben’s and Foucault’s exclusion of race from

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<sup>92</sup> Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 41.

<sup>93</sup> Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 138.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

their core theorization. His project “differs significantly from them. . . these concepts, seen individually and taken as a group, neglect and/or actively dispute the existence of alternative modes of life alongside the violence, subjection, exploitation, and racialization that define the modern human.”<sup>95</sup>

He concludes that Agamben’s theorization of bare life, centered on the ancient figure of the homo sacer and the Muselman - a problematic racial-religious term used in Germany to designate Muslim people - is the least sound philosophy to theorize institutionalized racism because the power of exclusion centered in the concentration camps lacks the flexibility also to theorize extended temporal processes that could not be defined as a state of emergency or outside of the juridico-political sphere. His forceful critique of Agamben determines his theory of life, and therefore what it means to be human, is a fundamentally incompatible understanding of race because “it founds a biological sphere above and beyond the reach of racial hierarchies.”<sup>96</sup> Weheliye interpreting Agamben writes,

However, it is only because Agamben codifies the Muselman as an apolitical (Un)Mensch that he can state the following: ‘At the point in which Haftling becomes a Muselman, the biopolitics of racism so to speak transcends race, penetration into a threshold in which it no longer possible to establish caesuras’ (*Remnants [of Auschwitz]*, 85). Agamben’s claim that biopolitics of race transcends racism positioning something like an absolute biological substance that leaves flesh behind and accomplishes the transformation in a life.

For the Muselman to hold the limit, Weheliye argues that it calls for the shedding of racialization in its particularity. “In order for the Muselman to function as the most

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<sup>95</sup> Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 1-2.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*

radical paradigm of bare life Agamben must insist on the individuality of this state so that it does not resemble traditional racial identity. And, despite being the product of reciliation, the Muselman represent the indivisible endpoint of modern politics' conscription of human biological matter."<sup>97</sup>

Foucault receives a more sympathetic reading than Agamben but retains a questionable division of state racism from ethnic racism.<sup>98</sup> Weheliye points out that a caesura exists between ethnic racism and biological racism. "Despite the fact the histories of colonialism and racism secure Foucault's definition of biopolitics," Weheliye charges transparency of the white gaze, "for Foucault the meaning of colonization and ethnic racism are immediately understandable, and as such they are exploited without the peripheral benefits of explication." Foucault indeed positions an understanding in a biological frame.<sup>99</sup>

Ultimately, Weheliye concludes that there are too many gaps in Foucault's early theorizations of biopolitics to conceptualize race, racism, or colonialism adequately. Given its shortcomings, biopolitics requires correcting, modifying, and extending. He attempts to rectify some of the shortcomings of biopolitics discourse on race and offers alternate ways of theorizing racialized assemblages of body and human from the vantage point of black studies. He repositioned the starting point for theorizing biopolitics of racialized assemblages by privileging Hortense Spiller and Sylvia Wynters in developing

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<sup>97</sup> Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 55.

<sup>98</sup> Puar suggests Weheliye gives a questionably general reading of Foucault. Debates on how to read Foucault are consistently joined with works on Foucault.

<sup>99</sup> Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, Updated Edition. New York (NY: Basic Books, 2020), 8.

the concept of habeas viscus in direct contrast to the lacunae he finds in Giorgio Agamben's bare life and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Foucault's biopolitics. Weheliye does not cut ties with previous theorizations but necessarily moves beyond it. Although Weheliye's argument resides in the same conceptual borough as Agamben's bare life, Foucault's biopolitics, Patterson's social death, and to a certain extent Mbembe's necropolitics," he does not remain there. *Habeas Viscus* is indebted to Hortense Spillers distinction between body and flesh. Weheliye seeks to position flesh as the locus for political theorization. Flesh is meant to contain the histories of violence and oppression against flesh as well as "reclaim the atrocity flesh as a pivotal arena for the politics emanating from different traditions of the oppressed. Flesh resists reliance upon "resistance and agency." <sup>100</sup>

Weheliye breaks the previous biopolitical conceptualization open by pointing to the significant forces that have barred "nonwhite subjects from the category of the human as it is performed in the modern west." <sup>101</sup>

If racialization is understood not as a biological or cultural descriptor but as a conglomerate of sociopolitical relations that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans, then blackness designates a changing system of unequal power structures that apportion and delimit which humans can lay claim to full human status and which humans cannot. Conversely, "white supremacy" may be understood as a logic of social organization that produces regiments, institutionalized, and militarized conceptions of hierarchized "human" difference. <sup>102</sup>

*Security apparatus: tactics, strategies, and mechanics of debility*

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<sup>100</sup> Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 2.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>102</sup> Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 3.

Security apparatuses continually expand to incorporate more and more areas of control, in contrast to refining the discipline sites. "Regimes of securitization driven by calculated risks and averages" enact ever increasing modes of control that arrange, manage, and regularize bodies in new ways, in evolving technocratic ways that are not free from regimes of discipline but instead are "braided and enmeshed historical and spatial modalities."<sup>103</sup> "The two prominent examples Foucault gives are leprosy and smallpox to reveal disciplinary power based on an exclusion." In the example of leprosy, which he contrasts with smallpox, "the managed epidemic through 'apparatuses of security' that enact powerful interventions in terms of 'the birth rate, the mortality rate, various biological disabilities, and the effects of the environment.'"<sup>104</sup> What remains to be fleshed out is the role of the built environment's role in materializing these different forms of power.

Security apparatuses of exclusion (disciplinary power is centripetal) and inclusion (control is centrifugal) "are invested in modulating a prolific range of affective bodily capacity and debilities - 'differential normalities.'"<sup>105</sup> This process of bringing the abnormal closer to the normal becomes incorporated into crip nationalism, where some are marked as disabled and become sites of production and privilege. At the same time, other bodies are debilitated and excluded from late capitalist logic, which David Mitchell

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<sup>103</sup> Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 21.

<sup>104</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*, 138.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, 22.

and Sharon Snyder name "ablenationalism" in *The Biopolitics of Disability: Neoliberalism, Ablenationalism, and Peripheral Embodiment*.<sup>106</sup>

Puar interprets her project through a modified biopolitical lens; she tends to keep discipline and control bound together by using Foucault's term "security apparatuses." She prefers theorizing control, but it is likely due to control's ability to be obscured by discipline and evade detection.<sup>107</sup> She applies the arguments put forth by Gilles Deleuze in "Postscript on Control Societies," which is often read as temporally separating discipline and control, making it more helpful in determining how these powers reinforce each other. Instead, think "discipline and control enmeshed."<sup>108</sup>

Puar makes significant corrections to reductionist reformulations of "new" biopolitics as transforming from disciplinary power to control power. Of course, her theorization of the biopolitics of debility has the advantage of incorporating a new awareness of control mechanisms, post-1984<sup>#</sup> surveillance technologies, which he could only begin that have emerged in the 21st century. However, in most cases where she looks at settler-colonialist tactics, she identifies control as the primary apparatus through which power acts on populations - not on individual bodies. The biopolitics of debility traces the events and the extended temporospatial apparatuses that tell the stories of population production, management, and control. Succinctly put, "Stories of dividuality are stories of control societies."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, eds. *The Biopolitics of Disability*, 22.

<sup>107</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," October, vol. 59, *JSTOR*, 1992, pp. 3–7.

<sup>108</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*, 21.

<sup>109</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*, xx.



I mean to be careful not to reduce one conflict to another. The differences in cultures and contexts resist any simple analogy, but lessons are learned from analyzing tactics of power implementation. Control tactics are not exclusively exercised in colonial settings. Tactics of control are also seen operating in the United States. The spatial dynamics of debility include circulation, mobility, and zoning. The control over space often takes micro-forms - zones within territories - in the United States.

Ultimately, the nature of security that Puar is interested in making legible in her chapter "The Cost of Getting Better" extends the models of power and increases the utilization of technologies of control that measure, calculate, and identify at the level of the individual and forms subjects not only concerning disciplinary forms of action on specific bodies.<sup>110 111</sup> The security apparatuses that function through control and disciplinary power that are most helpful for developing an intervention into actions of displacement and zoning for targeting becomes clearer when Puar turns to the built environment's role in an assemblage of biopolitical power when she turns to "infrastructural war."<sup>112</sup>

In *Security, Territory, and Population*, Foucault argues that the critical distinction between the sovereign and the liberal state becomes the basis of government justification. The liberal values established in individual freedom require the legitimation for governing. No longer is governing justified simply by the status of the sovereign. Puar

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<sup>110</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*. When acting in coordination discipline and control, "disciplinary apparatuses function in part as foils for control mechanisms and not in teleological or developmentalist progressions."

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, 24.

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*, 133.

interprets similar justifications for disability rehabilitation as an aspect of disability paternalism and guardianship transposed onto a place and a population becoming tied to debilitation rehabilitation neoliberal self perpetuation - the purpose of rehabilitation to increase the value follows the prior debilitation by settler colonialism. The justification to rehabilitate becomes further communicated as a shared value through media instrumentalization of disability in the service of occupation. Protectionism and guardianship become reflected in neoliberal humanitarian efforts through NGOs, international organizations, and democratic governments.<sup>113</sup>

Reflecting on the media reports and images of war and humanitarian actions during a conflict, Puar quotes from Ben-Moshe is "Movements at War?,"

Paradoxically this imagery and rhetoric can easily translate by the government into legitimization of more aggression, as measures of prevention and defense of future bodily casualties. The self-defense mechanism cannot operate from a position of superiority, especially when Israel is seen in the world as a military superpower. Therefore, the use of Israelis maimed in terror attacks is an important strategy to defer any criticism on the complete lack of balance between oppressor and occupied in these acts.<sup>114</sup>

By focusing attention on media representation and political rhetoric, Puar aligns with Moshe is explanations of *strategies*.<sup>115</sup> Puar interprets these "strategies" as "neoliberal alibis."

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<sup>113</sup> I am not qualified to interpret the complex sociopolitical policies context shaping the West Bank and Gaza. I am not attempting to describe and interpret the conflicts. Rather, I follow Puar's work to help me think through the logics, tactics, technologies, ethical reasoning, and moral justifications that governing powers deploy. I argue that similar implementations of power can be read in like terms, even if the power relations at play exhibit different forms.

<sup>114</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*, 107.

<sup>115</sup> These discursive processes are part of assemblages of power that involve strategy, I hold closer to an analysis of power that questions the presence of a strategic center which strategies imply.

She writes, "Palestinians are the debilitated bodies in contrast to the rehabilitated bodies protected by the Israeli state."<sup>116</sup> Debilitation tactics that produce and sustain both "intense forms of disability through war" and "endemic forms of debility, for example, through food and medicine rationing to Gaza and restrictions on the access to medical care" happen through, as Puar makes legible, "a concomitant deployment of maiming as a central tactic of settler colonialism in order to occupy, combined with the understanding the Palestinian body is inherently deficient and thus carries with it the potential to be disabled. The resulting debilitation of Palestinians dehumanizes them in order to (further) ratify occupation."<sup>117</sup>

Puar's identification of neoliberal alibis amalgamates arguments for both increased capacitation of bodies and spaces as well as the debilitation of persons and places through constriction and restriction. I find this paradox particularly relevant in analyzing an event such as Operation Clean Sweep and the Executive Order put into effect in October 2021. The specific connections between events would require more attention, but the tethering of maiming Palestinians "as a tactic of settler colonialism in order to occupy" with "maintenance of populations."<sup>118</sup>

I highlight the centrality of a settler colonial lens to mark where control of mobility within a territory manifests as movement debility.<sup>119</sup> Settler colonial tactics that devalue particular zoned bodies count on the calculation that, "Numerous health issues,

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<sup>116</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*, 108.

<sup>117</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*, 109.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*, 107.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*, 109.

debilitations, and deaths due to 'movement restriction' in the West Bank and Gaza attest to this slipperiness between movement impairment and impairing mobility."<sup>120</sup> The double movement of mobility impairment and impaired mobility is highlighted in areas of restricted movement due to infrastructural constraints. The built environment can restrict movements that exacerbate numerous health conditions and impairments, pointing to the "slipperiness between mobility impairment and impairing mobility."<sup>121</sup> New checkpoints may be constructed, and buildings may be erased within a day. Access to water, power, food and medical supplies is precarious. Puar describes these processes as "war infrastructure." When viewed through the lenses of debility and capacity, the built environment blurs distinctions between body and architecture (broadly defined). The built environment encapsulates social interactions, daily material realities, buildings, infrastructures, modes of mobility, and questions of access. Particularly under occupation, the built environment exists in constant flux, rendering movement and physical ability precarious and unpredictable given changing conditions.

Everyday life, understood in terms of the body as a part of assemblages, must include infrastructural theories. Achille Mbembe calls it "war on life support" or "war infrastructure," in Puar's case. Sari Hanafi terms similar processes "spacio-cide" and Omar Jabary Salamanca calls this "'asphyxatory' application of power."<sup>122</sup> These forms of security and control cannot be reduced to either land demarcations, zone patrolling, or

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<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*, 135.

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*,

digital policing of virtual worlds.<sup>123</sup> The example of Gaza is unique, Helga Tawil-Souri argues, because of the entanglement of these broader systems. Puar's persistent theorization of debilitating security apparatus is relevant to Mass & Cass. (I am increasingly considering this area a "zone of debility"). An assemblage of powers is necessary to chip away at the overwhelming number of regulatory, surveillance, and normalizing vectors that cut across and through bodies living in open space.<sup>124</sup>

*Security theology and home demolition*

Legal scholar Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian theorizes not a different form of political theology but rather another starting point. She develops her concept of security theology based on her extensive activism combating gender based specific violence and her scholarship developing feminist theories of security during Israeli and Palestinian conflicts. Shalhoub-Kevorkian has researched violence against Palestinian women in Israel and Palestine for over twenty years. Her approaches increasingly combine the politics of fear with security theology, each reinforcing the other aided by surveillance tactics. In *Security Theology, Surveillance and the Politics of Fear*, Shalhoub-Kevorkian describes processes that divide the world into us-them, friend-enemy, which echo Schmitt's political theology's core argument for the necessity to determine friend from enemy to rule, survive, and prosper as a state. Unlike Schmitt, Shalhoub-Kevorkian does not advocate for distinction but instead criticizes the combination of political strategies with theological justifications that allow for friend-enemy division characterized by fear,

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<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Eye of Power: A Conversation with Jean-Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot," in *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 155.

moral authority, and militaristic capacity. I will refine sovereign power with more engagement with Shalhoub-Kevorkian's theories. For example, where political theology identifies the sovereign with deciding between friend-enemy, Shalhoub-Kevorkian identifies security theology with segregating "the world into secure and non-secure zones."<sup>125</sup> Shalhoub-Kevorkian describes how Israel pursues security through occupation, preemptive strikes, home demolitions, and pervasive observation. Therefore, her approach to political theology is grounded in everyday events and the control of the built environment, including surveillance over zones of insecurity.

Shalhoub-Kevorkian approaches theology as a critique of state power and aggressive action. She contends that theological foundations justify violent acts and promote a political process of conflict that locks into a self-perpetuating fear-security regime. I read her approach to security theology as political theology and not a theology of the political<sup>126</sup>. The security theology she describes is attached to the formation of the Israeli state, rooted in a history of ethnic and religious persecution. While I draw upon aspects of Shalhoub-Kevorkian's research to advance my analysis, her brief discussions of Zionism and the biblical quotations from Israeli politicians cited do not provide sufficient depth for a nuanced theological interpretation. Her argument is better understood as a political theology focused on demonstrating how theological language is

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<sup>125</sup> Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Security Theology*, 7.

<sup>126</sup> I am not erecting a border between the two terms, perhaps a porous membrane, but I make the distinction to denote the starting point of the broader scholarly conversations taking place in different contexts with different commitments.

wielded for political ends, rather than a comprehensive examination of theology's and faith communities' involvement in state policies and practices.<sup>127</sup>

She diagnoses an Israeli state complex that consists of fear, anxiety, and insecurity, which merges into the justification and production of a security apparatus. She argues that security "was transformed into a religion, an indubitable theology. This theology has been combined with the Zionist biblical claims of the Jewish 'birthright' to the 'Promised Land' to create a new settler colonial theology in Israel."<sup>128</sup> To make this claim, I'd argue there would need to be more clarification around the concepts she is deploying, such as "Zionist theology" and its relationship to Judaism and the state of Israel.

While my work is less focused on Shalhoub-Kevorkian's argument around the "key historical moment that conflated settler colonial ideology...and the theological ideology of the Chosen People/Promised Land narrative," the interviews she conducts with Palestinian women living in Gaza and the West Bank are immediately relevant to politics of homelessness. Their testimonies clearly and forcefully show that for people living in various states of precarity, shelter, the home, and surveillance combine to form an "ecology of sensation" that contributes to *psychosocial trauma*.<sup>129</sup> Shalhoub-Kevorkian extends the common perception of debilitating violence to include (im)material structures that surround, support, and segment the body.

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<sup>127</sup> Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Security Theology*, 14.

<sup>128</sup> Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Security Theology*, 14.

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*, 36.

*Security Theology, Surveillance, and the Politics of Fear* is decidedly a feminist project. Shalhoub-Kevorkian is concerned chiefly with the everyday - women's mundane, routine activities and circulations are her sites of analysis. She writes, "The politics of everydayness enables a feminist reading of conflict because it draws our awareness to routine, intimate and private sites where power is both reproduced and contested...Moreover, a focus on everydayness draws attention to the inherently gendered nature of colonial power."<sup>130</sup> The women's testimony challenges the limits of the body. The human body extends to include surrounding nonhuman objects and sensations - they are intimately bound to the houses/home; thereby, action taken against the home is an act of violence against the body assemblage, which includes place and dwelling.

Objects, most often perceived as inactive and inert, become part of security apparatuses that can debilitate the body through proxy by acting on and, therefore, through the built environment. The absent present body becomes debilitated by way of infrastructure warfare or spacio-cide. What I hope to show in my larger project is that structures meant to protect or ground bodies also have the ability to harm them through destruction and displacement. In my work, I am advocating for an understanding of bodies as interconnected with the materials that comprise their surrounding architectural and built contexts, contexts which frequently become conceptually separated from the decision-making processes that initiate changes to those environments and structures. As a result, a person's embodied form becomes perceived as "out of place" when described together with discarded "property, belongings, things, items, or trash." Similarly, the destruction of supportive shelters during so-called "tent encampment sweeps" fails to

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<sup>130</sup> Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Security Theology*, 2.



register as a debilitating act against the body. The strategy of shelter demolition has several advantages in a liberal context. In a liberal state, destruction without direct contact is more tolerable than images of “blatant” state violence.

In her example of everyday violence inflicted upon Palestinian women, Shalhoub-Kevorkian described the 2008-2009 shooting deaths of Majda and Raya Hajaj during an Israeli military strike in Gaza. After describing the shooting of the women (who were holding white flags at the time) and the subsequent release of the United Nations report (UNFFMGC or the Goldstone Report) that led to the arrest of the accused soldier by the Israeli military, she stated, "but the driver of the bulldozer who buried the bodies near the family home and the officer who refused to allow the family to evacuate the bodies (which remained there until the end of the war) were never investigated, let alone charged with any crime."<sup>131</sup> Here, the inclusion of the bulldozer that buried the women's bodies indicates Shalhoub-Kevorkian's aim to analyze how machinery and infrastructure can enact everyday violence on individuals, beyond just firearms or direct physical harm.

Her documentation underscores the need for new analytical frameworks capable of identifying everyday practices that seldom register as elements of security apparatus. Her inclusion of a bulldozer<sup>132</sup>, which is not purely a militaristic tool, but a machine that has other stated purposes, suggests that what enables a perpetuation of debilitation, particularly in neoliberal humanitarian places of interest, is the flexibility of tools that get deployed through a biopolitical logic that also mirrors a colonial logic. Her attention to

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<sup>131</sup> Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Security Theology*, 3.

<sup>132</sup> The bulldozer returns later in the book when Shalhoub-Kevorkian describes IDF's home demolition policy.

the everyday machinery that participates in security operations helps to look closer at how the Public Works' garbage trucks are operationalized in the clearing tent "encampments." The incorporation of Public Works into strategies of control is not incidental. We must expand the category of actors in events to understand how the everyday bulldozer and garbage truck are used to accomplish political aims.

Shalhoub-Kevorkian details the development of Israeli enforced house demolition policy supported by an interpretation of Article 119 of the 1945 Defense Emergency Regulations. The result is an evolving practice of demolition that has a long history. I focus on the reported effects and affects of house destruction to highlight the role of architecture and space in governing bodies, which may not necessarily be illegal. Actions on space, place, zones, and surveillance often work in extra-legal areas, making it difficult to analyze as part of the state's power structure. She writes, "The mundane surveillance over her life is not just a security issue; it is a tool in the hands of the attackers to govern their lives." She continues, "The home becomes a unique site of intervention that has reverberating effects - "The home is responsible for the preservation of psychological and social life and the prevention of social death."<sup>133</sup> Many of the women attest that the dismantling of the home means the destruction of the physical as well as the emotional home.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Security Theology*, 74.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid*, 105. While attacks that force individuals to make difficult life decisions might not *legally* be considered violations of rights or the law, "the gendered impact of surveillance and fear clearly influences women's choices and affects children's willingness to study and focus on their future" (*S T*, 39).

Shalhoub-Kevorkian's discussion suggests the physicalness of a metaphoric place does not end at the moment of house destruction or even bodily trauma. The threat of potential attack in Gaza becomes a preemptive affective "unhoming."<sup>135</sup> "Living under constant uncertainty of what might happen tomorrow 'unhomes' the homespace," damaging the perception of privacy and security within the domestic space to such a degree that one of the Shalhoub-Kevorkian interviewees, Norma, declares: "Even here, in the rental unit, and after losing my home, I feel that the walls are transparent and they can see us, reach us, track us."<sup>136</sup> The changing of the built structure of house and home also extends into the spaces just beyond the home, the topography of the everyday.<sup>137</sup>

Shalhoub-Kevorkian supplements Foucault's "micropolitics of everydayness" with Mbembe's definition of necropolitics to deepen an understanding of mundane securitization and sovereignty. In his essay *Necropolitics*, in which he is interested in the forms of power that control death, even after death, Mbembe modifies Foucault's notion of biopower to two other concepts: the state of exception and the state of siege. . . trajectories by which the state of exception and the relation of enmity have become the normative basis of the right to kill."<sup>138</sup> Power over Palestinian bodies, alive and dead, becomes a source of fear. Shalhoub-Kevorkian determines fear of Palestinians necessitates in the minds of the occupier the control of spaces. She follows Mbembe's

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<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*, 110.

<sup>136</sup> Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Security Theology*, 110.

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*, 111.

<sup>138</sup> Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Security Theology*, 111. If I extended this essay, I would include commentary on the developing scholarship on necropolitics in works such as the essays in the edited volume *Queer Necropolitics*. Haritaworn, Jin; Kuntsman, Adi; Posocco, Silvia. *Queer Necropolitics*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014.

assertion that necropolitics names the sovereign's right to kill is inscribed in the shape of sociospatial relationships. Shalhoub-Kevorkian argues fear drives the security political theology of land occupation. Foucault describes when he discusses the Panopticon in *Discipline and Punish*. Fear becomes rooted in both the colonizer and the colonized. The "omniveillance"<sup>139</sup> of the occupying force perpetuates anxiety and fear from the buzzing and swarming of security apparatuses.

Israeli architect Eyal Weisman calls this a "swarming strategy." He explains swarming "to my understanding is simultaneous arrival at a target from many nodes - if possible, from 360 degrees."<sup>140</sup> Through a methodology he calls "forensic architecture," Weisman gives special attention to conflict zones' spatial and infrastructural actants. He concludes that a state military targeting networked groups invents new strategies that "become much more diffused and scattered, flexible and swarm-like." Shalhoub-Kevorkian adds that swarming strategies turn "homespaces and the stability and sheltering power of the home into fluid, unclear and uncertain spaces."<sup>141</sup> She further argues, "The changes to Palestinian topography combined with the swarming attack against the Palestinian home and the memory of this topography should be understood through its power to invade Palestinians' very intimate spaces, and through its velocity,

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<sup>139</sup> After writing this term to suggest the perfected technology of surveillance could be interpreted as omnisurveillance or God's eye view. I found one article from 2009 that uses the term omniveillance but in a different register. Josh Blackman, "Omniveillance, Google, Privacy in Public, and the Right to Your Digital Identity: A Tort for Recording and Disseminating an Individual's Image over the Internet," *Santa Clara Law Review*, 49 (2009): 313.

<sup>140</sup> Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Security Theology*, 111-112. Quoted by Shalhoub-Kevorkian.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*

density, and power to surprise, frighten and terrorize.”<sup>142</sup> The attack on a room or a home can rupture a sense of safety, social relations, and health. It is a debilitating strategy that acts on multiple layers. Many of these strategies elude identification or accountability because the effects are disarticulated from the causal apparatuses.

Israeli house demolitions require in-person enforcement of Palestinian women’s participation in dismantling their homes. These mandates may be read as integrating aspects of biopower (anatomopolitical and biopolitical) with the circulation of supplies, labor, and finances moving along neoliberal humanitarian power lines of production, exchange, and justification. These swarming strategies are transversed by affective forces, of which fear and anxiety are only a portion. The multiplicity of power emerges with its affections unique to any given configuration and different in unevenly producing and acting upon bodies unevenly. If there is a logic to be found, it would include moments of uncertainty, illogical “zigzags,” maneuverings that disorient.

Surveillance practices identify which houses are marked for demolition, but surveillance does not end at the level of administrative and techno-militaristic vigilance. These practices travel along vectors of intensities; enforcement of power combines with the affects of fear and anxiety. A swarming strategy of power causes ontological suffocation produced by the omnipresence of power.<sup>143</sup> “Omnipresence of power: not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but

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<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> William Connolly, in *Facing the Planetary, Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming*, crafts a subversive use of *swarming* worked through his uniquely politically-attuned Deleuzian lens. 2016

because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere,” Foucault forcefully argues.<sup>144</sup>

Dissecting the various forms of power driving complex trauma and re-traumatization is difficult due to their multidimensional, interconnected nature. An adaptive assemblage of forces governs both populations and territories in a manner that resists straightforward definition. The appearance of direct extra-legal sovereign intervention declared during emergencies collaborates in parallel with more incremental regulation of daily life. The control of infrastructure—such as transportation, utilities, and buildings that shape daily life—may operate in tandem with slower regulation through influence over constructed environments and routines. Diffuse surveillance practices intersect with specific institutional nodes constituting broader control networks. Both the rapid displays of sovereignty and the gradual shaping of routines and places serve to perpetuate the complex trauma experienced in embodied and situated forms. The intricacies of their messy entanglements are challenging to fully analyze and critique.

## CONCLUSION

The particularity of the people and events Shalhoub-Kevorkian is investigating requires us to pause before identifying what can be learned and applied to another geography, such as the very different set of circumstances surrounding Boston’s response to homelessness. We should not sidestep the problem, but perhaps, as far as biopolitics is

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<sup>144</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality I*, 93.

concerned, Foucault can offer a way forward that might also serve as an autocritique for his lack of attention to colonial practices and racializing power.<sup>145</sup>

Modes of surveillance cut across apparatuses of security and control. Positionality can be described in terms similar to Puar's. Where she asks, "Who is available for injury?" We might also ask, "Who is available for what types of surveillance?" Each regime of power has a set of surveillance techniques and practices: disciplinary, control, and sovereign. This approach is distinct from a framework that starts from identifying groups or populations. Established social problems are typically named from the outside by control mechanisms and public discourse by applying labels that presuppose a population(s). Abstract group representations and stigmatizing categorization stand in for social problems, such as homelessness or opioid addiction, and are used as a placeholder for much more complex circumstances. And different from grouping based on identity or demographic categories. Surveillance crosses the boundaries of group identity and has a logic of its own: watching (with intention, thereby effectively creating) a zone or territory for the bodies that inhabit it correctly/incorrectly, cross through it permissibly/impermissibly, or move too much/too little in this place.

Through a surveilling gaze directed at black and brown bodies, the construction of security zones recurs throughout Puar's and Shalhoub-Kevorkian's analysis. In my broader research, I am attempting to look more closely at how affective zones of security

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<sup>145</sup> Foucault and Deleuze, "Intellectuals and Power," 1972. This discussion between Foucault and Deleuze took place in 1972 against the backdrop of Foucault's heavy involvement in the Prisons Information Group (GIP), a prison abolitionist group committed to circulating the conditions in the French prisons through prisoners' own words."

are constructed and how bodies are marked and take shape within these zones.<sup>146</sup> Puar's most recent research questions are concerned with the surveillance fields that operate affectively as well as spatio-temporally. In an interview, Puar insists surveillance is not just about "acts of seeing or noticing" bodies. It is about collecting, curating. . .data and affect" and "a way of managing populations, creating identities, and claiming the future."<sup>147</sup> The idea of future-shaping affects produced through political power exists in both Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Puar's work. I see these themes opening up further discussions about the politics of affect and its spatial implications for the built environment. I plan to discuss public affects in further detail in this dissertation.<sup>148</sup>

*Zoning Debility: sociospatial registers of crisis*

How might we better understand the "Executive Order" that dislocates bodies and confiscates or destroys personal belongings and a "Public Health Emergency" that produces new surveillance zones and czars of oversight? How are these actions legitimized in the unique political environment of Boston, a liberal stronghold?<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, why is it so challenging to locate and therefore critique these mixed issues? As I have noted, their analytic difficulties stem partly from the deep entanglement between the historical evolution of policing, control, and conceptualizations of societal

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<sup>146</sup> I think with A. Weheliye about "racialized assemblages of the flesh" as a specific way of talking about race. These processes capture affective and spatial registers with race categories that do not necessarily include.

<sup>147</sup> Jasbir Puar and Lewis West, "Jasbir Puar: Regimes of Surveillance," *Cosmologies: A Magazine of Science, Religion, and Culture* (Harvard Divinity School) Interview by Lewis West, December 4, 2014.

<sup>148</sup> For example, Brian Massumi discusses fear in terms of preemptive action in his book *Ontopower: War, Powers, and the State of Perception* (Duke University Press, 2015).

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.*, 147-148, 151.



well-being. Another analytical consideration emerges from Puar's discussion of "infrastructures of warfare." As she elaborates, Israel maintains a form of "asphyxatory control" whereby a crisis can be engineered at will, having already established the bare minimum resources required for life that can then be withdrawn strategically. Salamanca terms this manufactured volatility an "elastic humanitarian crisis." The tactical wielding of such elastic powers to suspend or deny necessities for health and safety undertakes a strategic deployment capable even when framed through discourses of care and protection.

Continual reactivity to crisis obscures accountability from the activation or maintenance of a crisis. Forms of debilitation that are tied to restricted mobility or mandated mobilization, such as checkpoints (policing/surveillance) and touchpoints (public health), are set in motion by the power to dilate and shrink the time and space for body inhabitation. Because multiple and shifting spaces within a city's official borders function with a shifting arrangement of discipline, control, and security, we may think of them as "zones of debility." The phrase "zones of debility" reflects what "articulates the paradoxical relation of freedom to movement: move too much and one is unruly, too little and one is primitive."<sup>150</sup> The occupation of zones in the U. S. is difficult to justify for numerous reasons; unhidden power is economically and politically costly. In contrast to a monarchical show of force, the security apparatus of surveillance "involves little expense" and extends power at a minimal cost.<sup>151</sup> The next section of this dissertation will look at the interlocking roles of surveillance apparatuses, sovereign power, and

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<sup>150</sup> Puar, *The Right to Maim*. Puar quoting Hagar Kotef.

<sup>151</sup> *ibid.*, 155.

biopower - specifically as they operate within choreographed spatial experiences of control, confinement, and care.

## INTERLUDE TWO

### CONDITIONAL INTERIOR ARCHITECTURES

#### INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I explored the roles of morality, religious virtue, and pastoral power in shaping the spatial and architectural organization of populations, and how surveillance technologies contribute to a biopolitics of place. This results in an unequal distribution of life across various zones of debility. The construction of the built environment necessitates the coordination of materials and processes, which are influenced by economic, political, and social practices. For instance, buildings designed to tackle social issues, such as public shelters or transitional housing, are constructed through forces and factors that extend beyond mere design and assembly.

However, by examining the architectural processes of a specific building (including its history, design, labor, materials, program, unbuilt alternatives, and ongoing lifecycle), I argue that this reveals a multitude of human and nonhuman actors and agents. These elements are often overlooked by dominant narratives that favor certain subjects over others. Each building mentioned in the timeline from Interlude 2 possesses a material context, being part of a material assemblage that contributes to the ongoing formation of a place and its encounters.

The construction of the Boston Almshouse and the Suffolk House of Correction on Deer Island in Boston Harbor, for example, involved planning and material assembly influenced both immediately by the contemporary context and distantly by cultural shifts addressing social issues. These issues included the conflict between ideas of charity and

philanthropy, social science and social Darwinism, the growing separation of church and state, abolitionist movements, the Civil War, and the assimilation of Indigenous people. This assimilation included the establishment of “praying towns” in the 17th century in Natick, Massachusetts, and boarding schools in the 19th century, starting with the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania – the first government-run boarding school for Indigenous or Native American children from over a hundred different tribes.<sup>1</sup>

This historical context, with its intricate web of influences and actors, directly informs contemporary practices in shelter construction and social work. Modern shelters and social work methodologies have evolved from these historical foundations, reflecting an ongoing dialogue between past and present in addressing the needs of marginalized communities. Thus, understanding the complex history of buildings like the Boston Almshouse or the Suffolk House of Correction offers valuable insights into the challenges and strategies that shape today's approaches to social problems and the creation of supportive spaces.

By shifting our focus to the present-day interior architectures of these shelters, we can delve deeper into the relationships and interactions that define current social work practices. This closer examination uncovers how space, design, and environment continue to play a pivotal role in facilitating or hindering the effective delivery of social services, thereby shaping the experiences and outcomes for those who rely on these critical resources.

## **CONDITIONAL INTERIORS, CHOREOGRAPHED PROXIMITIES**

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<sup>1</sup> Carlisle Indian School Project 501(c)(3), <https://carlisleindianschoolproject.com/past/>

The selected images capture various in-between spaces and transition areas that reveal how architectural arrangements stage, structure, and influence encounters. Scenes of corridors, waiting rooms, thresholds, and passages are featured to draw attention to the negotiated proximities enabled and precluded by design. By capturing transitional zones and zones of transfer like hallways, stairwells, and checkpoints—areas that shape the experiences of moving—the collection highlights how interior layouts choreograph approved and disciplined modes of interaction by regimenting the circuits of arrival between bodies. The photographs provide insights into architectures' ability to spatially configure, dilute or densify bodies, in turn regulating the logistics and dynamics of proximity.

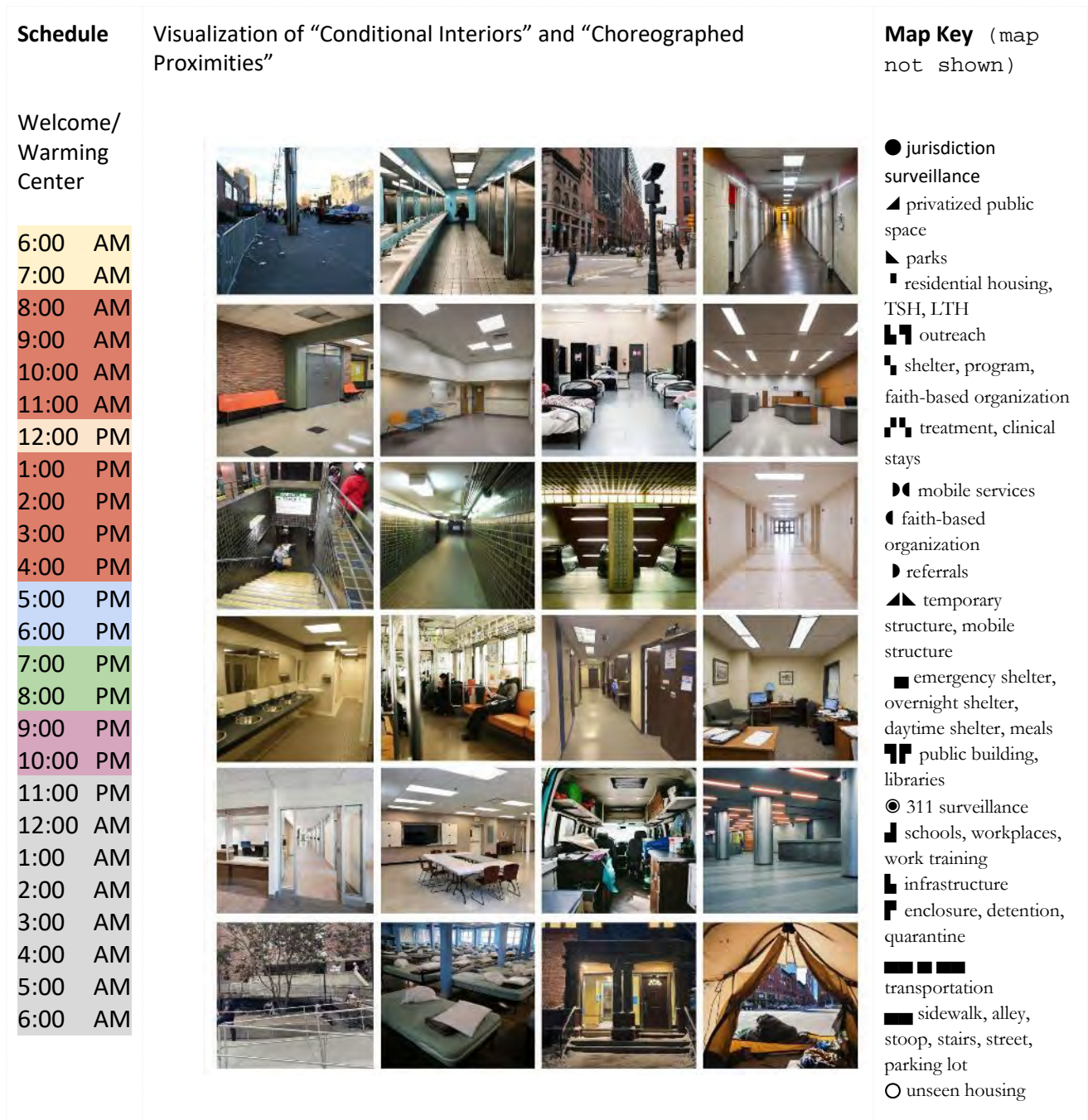
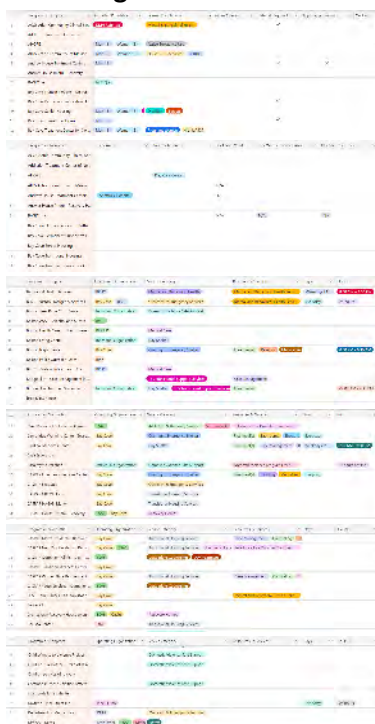


Figure 45 Fig. The collection of photographs is framed on the left by a schedule for accessing a location recently renamed from a “warming center” to a “welcome center,” and on the right by a series of programs, along with their corresponding architecture and infrastructures, that individuals interact with while navigating Boston’s service landscape. These images capture the diverse architectural elements and structures within Boston that people encounter daily in their quest for resources. Each image narrates a unique aspect of the urban landscape and the way it molds the experiences of its inhabitants. The images demonstrate the movement through the built environment that acts as gates and release valves to  $\uparrow \downarrow \leftrightarrow$  pressure/friction/flow. The figure is not meant to document an individual’s experience; rather, it aims to highlight the architectures and infrastructures that influence bodies moving through the built environment within systems of movement and circulation.

## Referral Table for Outreach Workers

Name  
Website  
Operating Organization  
Service Category  
Resources & Services  
Days  
Hours  
Admitted Populations  
Special Populations  
Languages Available  
Referral Required  
Apply by Phone  
Intake Required  
Phone Number  
Address  
Area & Zip Code  
Transit Stop  
Landmark  
Nearby Amenities  
No. of Beds  
Dry/Wet (Substance Use)  
Low Threshold

## 168+ Programs




Accounts from The Harvard Square Homeless Shelter (HSHS) published in the book *Shelter*:

Though [M.] cared deeply about [N]’s success and admired his decision, she nonetheless had the responsibility—as a shelter’s Work Contract director—to enforce the consequences of Nat’s decision to give up his savings [in response to his ex-wife asking him for financial help].<sup>2</sup>

A. D. recalled “I was determining whether someone was going to sleep inside or not. So that was a responsibility. You had a basically limited resource which there was a high demand for, and you had to kind of figure out the best way to distribute it.”<sup>3</sup>

[L. L.] acknowledged “the first time you have to tell someone they cannot stay, for whatever reason. . . They come to the door drunk, or not even drunk but over the limit, but you just have to tell them they cannot stay.”<sup>4</sup>

[L. L.] recalled “[A ‘guest’ at the shelter] was very adamant that he had not been smoking all day—he’d just come out of rehab for it, so it was in his system still, but he was not high. And I was like, ‘There is nothing I can do about it. I have to assume otherwise because this test is here.’ But you know personally I believed him.”<sup>5</sup>

2 173.

3 171.

4 171.

5 171

ID/Security Check		
Storage		
Bathrooms		
Showers		
Map		

*Figure Represents a collective attempt to create a guide to help people navigate the complex system of organizations and their related architectures.*

## HARVARD SQUARE HOMELESS SHELTER (HSHS)

Jonathan F. Zaff lauds Scott Seider's *Shelter* for highlighting the value add "young adults" or "emerging adults" offer to places such as Harvard Square Shelter (HSS).<sup>6</sup> In *Shelter*, Seider spends much of his time discussing the ways the student volunteers grew and learned life lessons from their interactions at the HSS.

HSS, a shelter that was originally opened by a Cambridge congregation, is credited as being "the first-(and only)-in-the-nation student-run homeless shelter, just outside the ivy-covered walls of Harvard University." The opportunities for Harvard students and people experiencing homelessness to "co-inside" are not a product of chance. The juxtaposition of privilege and "exceptional" encounters is a common unnamed theme in *Shelter*. The stories reflect many of the prevailing sentiments that fill the atmosphere when positions in an encounter step into the roles where the individual

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<sup>6</sup> Jonathon Zaff, Review of *Shelter: Where Harvard meets the homeless* [Review of the book *Shelter: Where Harvard meets the homeless*, by S. Seider]. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 26(3), 414–419. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558410396860>

Scott Seider, *Shelter: Where Harvard Meets the Homeless*, Continuum International Publishing Group, New York, 2010. Seider is currently an Associate Professor of Applied Developmental Psychology, at Boston College. He was a former volunteer at Harvard Square Homeless Shelter. His study included seventy-three qualitative interviews, and 53 people shared their experiences at the shelter.



with authority to control space is simultaneously the one who “learns” and “changes for the better.”<sup>7</sup>

In the same line HHS is described as a model shelter due to its encounters; it is “an organization providing unique developmental opportunities for young adults to impact their community.”<sup>8</sup> At the conclusion of his overall positive review of Seider’s project, Zaff raises some vital points—even though they read as after-thoughts. He writes, “There are also potential downfalls. . . [to the students’] over-confidence...Real people are being impacted by any and all decisions that the students make.”<sup>9</sup>

Zaff admits, “It would be interesting to understand the counterfactuals to the positive experiences that serve as proof points to Seider’s thesis that the Harvard Shelter is inherently beneficial to the students and the homeless.”<sup>10</sup> What Zaff identifies as *interesting*, motivates my attempt to pry open the moments of spatialized encounters within the housing system that are permeated with unequal power dynamics and the high stakes that unfold in places of shelter and care.

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<sup>7</sup> Zaff, Review of *Shelter*, 415.

<sup>8</sup> Zaff, Review of *Shelter*, 415.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 416.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 417.



*Figure A collage depicting the interior architecture of organizations with multiple programs—each with different rules, regulations, and requirements that participate in potential encounters. By R. Kyle Warren*

It is tempting to think of “making a case” or “gathering evidence” to construct what “really” happened. In daily encounters, piecing together what happened is not always a desired end, nor is it without limits. We are stepping into roles and scripts that we are both a part of and that extends beyond us. What occurs in an encounter that goes beyond a re-telling or a making sense of an encounter? What is in the room with us that resists translation but is nonetheless felt, tangible, material, and active? What participates beyond our intention, control, or awareness? And why is it impossible to own the complete event of encounter? Therefore, what encounters are needed to sustain the

order/friction in a dwelling/while dwelling?<sup>11</sup>



*Figure 46 Architectures of blurred interior/exterior relations. By R. Kyle Warren*

Do we understand how a person navigates the housing system? Do our conceptions or attempts at defining “the problem of homelessness” reflect the experiences of navigating the architectures of the housing system, such as Boston’s social services landscape? And are the apparatuses in place for maintaining and structuring the city’s temporary, emergency, and low-income architecture just or even reasonably navigable? What is available to help guide, critique, or change the passageways of care and sheltering?

How do we avoid staying at the level of the institution? How do we move from the scale of the hospital, the prison, the school, or the shelter to a hospital, a prison, a school, or a shelter? If Foucault’s analysis of power helps us resist a philosophical slide of “the building” into a-politics<sup>12</sup> These questions linger as I move to chapter two.

<sup>11</sup> Dwelling, as both a noun and a verb, is an enclosure, but it is also navigating, circulating, and relating. A dwelling participates; it is an occurrence.

<sup>12</sup> —the kind that Heidegger describes building and dwelling in terms of Being,

## CONCLUSION

How do we continue to think creatively and critically about the dynamics and flows that move through particular buildings? The scale would need to shift, and the background would have to come forward. The materiality and the intensities in a particular building or place that remain unnoticeable or made inert through their normalization must emerge to an actionable level. The next chapter explores the complex and conflicting nature of a housing system that increases people's involvement with agencies and programs "at a frequency higher than chance" —along racialized, gendered, and ableist lines.

In the following chapter, I will focus on the interior architecture of a place to elaborate on the dynamics that take place in programs that are out of sight or behind closed doors. The continued difficulty of articulating the complexity of an encounter that can be accounted for in reports, case notes, and qualitative studies means this dissertation's work is ongoing.



*Figure 47 R. Kyle Warren*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DWELLING – NEAR:

#### PROXIMITIES AND FRICTION AT HOME

#### INTRODUCTION | ARCHITECTURE: TO BRING INTO PROXIMITY

To ‘co-inside’ suggests how different things happen at the same moment, a happening that brings things near to other things, whereby the nearness shapes the shape of each thing. Simultaneous arrivals are not necessarily a matter of chance; arrivals are determined, at least in a certain way, as a determination that might determine what gets near, even if it does not decide what happens *once we are near*.<sup>1</sup>  
–Sara Ahmed

In this dissertation’s Introduction, I established that “homelessness,” rather than being “outside” of architecture, is a product of a “housing system” that materializes histories of inequality, marginalization, and oppression.<sup>2</sup> Both being housed and unhoused are part of a housing system that is reflective of a neoliberal economy entangled with politics of property ownership and the commodification of land and resources. In order to access or acquire housing, one must be subject to a system of exchange that comes with rules and conditions that, as I showed in Chapter 2, have deep-rooted histories associated with moralizing, pathologizing, paternalistic programs, and their associated infrastructures. This chapter extends the analysis of interior architecture, architectural elements, and their effects, building upon the exploration of how religious and theological histories contribute to the shaping of the built environment. It examines

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<sup>1</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 39.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in order to more fully understand the set of conditions commonly labeled homelessness, we must resist approaching the issue singularly from an assumption of lack of architecture, specifically housing, resulting in the activation of a housing system that produces an object that enters into the neoliberal economy and becomes an object of exchange within charity–philanthropy–NGO–government networks.

the architectural elements that, often relegated to the background, prefigure encounters by aggregating assemblages into relational proximities. It traces the subtle yet influential ways in which these elements orchestrate interactions within space. Through this exploration, an approach emerges that considers the concept of “living in proximity” (or “near dwelling”)<sup>3</sup> at the scale of *interior* architecture. Architectural elements that facilitate circulation and movement, especially *corridors* and *passages*, bear significant relevance to the orchestrations of encounters.

This chapter establishes how architectural elements partly shape an encounter—the moments of the co-inside, simultaneous arrivals, happenings that bring “things near to other things”<sup>4</sup>—are not necessarily matters of chance. Examining how living in proximity to others shapes and is shaped by hegemonic systems lies at the core of design justice principles. It also informs theological and philosophical perspectives on neighbor-ing, or dwelling in community with subjects and objects in shared spaces. It shifts the understanding of what it means to theopoetically become a neighbor, aligning it with a spatial justice framework.<sup>5</sup> This reorientation challenges traditional notions of neighborliness, infusing it with a deeper, justice-oriented meaning within the context of spatial dynamics and design. Perhaps a theopoetics of architecture would take on this

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<sup>3</sup> The term “neighbor” traces its linguistic roots to Old English, stemming from the combination of two distinct words: “neah,” meaning “near” or “close,” and “gebur,” which signifies a “dweller” or “inhabitant.” Over time, these two terms converged to form the Old English expression “neahgebūr,” encapsulating the idea of an individual living nearby or in close proximity to others. Ahmed writes, “A happening that brings things near to other things, whereby the nearness shapes the shape of things” which shifts the concept of neighbor, or *near dweller*, from the question of “Who?” to the question of “Where?”

<sup>4</sup> Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 39.

<sup>5</sup> To bridge the conceptual gap separating the body from the building, I propose that neighbor (near dweller) can be a source for looking at how “background objects” meet bodies in events of becoming.

project as part of its areas of focus, whereas a study of sacred architecture likely would not.

A theopoetics of architecture intentionally engages with the processes and professions of architecture to bridge the disciplines between process philosophy and theology and spatial and design justice. In this effort, bridge figures and concepts are essential to making the connections, literally, readable. One of the areas of concern in architecture is the physical forces that act on, between, and through building materials. *Friction* is one such force that is always present to some degree, even when engineered or architecturally designed solutions aim to minimize its measurable effects.. Material–relational friction, or (un)wanted bodily contact, is a theme Robin Evans illustrates in his study of the co-evolution of residential passageways with the changing social norms and class stratification of Victorian society.<sup>6</sup> Evans shows how architecture participates in the distancing or attracting of people in points of contact or encounters. It participates in relational friction through engineered proximities—dwelling near.

What is lost or overlooked if we stay at the scale of the building/institution type? How can we address what is in the room if it remains in the background or if we are oriented as a figure in addition to our identities?<sup>7</sup> Drawing on Sara Ahmed’s analysis of

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<sup>6</sup> Robin Evans, “Figures, Doors, Passages,” in *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays*, 1978.

<sup>7</sup> Dwelling is more than being inside an enclosure. That is not meant to be a profound statement at all; it’s most likely something that is very close to experience, it’s intuited, felt, it’s close. Close to the point that its background. The background is not necessarily the realm of disappearance, it’s also the realm of what is stays in the background, belongs to the background, is normalized so that it does not leap from the background and appear as out of place. This is similar to how Ahmed approaches phenomenology. She is interested in the background, or what is behind.



encounters/arrivals<sup>8</sup> and orientations, I probe the spatial and material conditions that are folded into the event of encounter. The *condition* of the encounter highlights the *conditional* nature of the types of encounters that happen in specific places, such as a specific shelter or a specific home, where different roles (guest/host, case manager/client, parent/child) come with different powers and privileges. By looking through the lens of Sara Ahmed's approach to phenomenology and spatial affects, and Robin Evans' approach to circulation in architecture, I look at encounters by "turning down" the volume of the roles of the human actors—for a moment—to increase the levels of the surround in order to better understand how they commingle.

### *Dwelling Near*

The previous chapter delved into Foucault's analysis of pastoral power, biopolitics, and governmentality on a macro scale.<sup>9</sup> The macro-scale references his analysis of biopolitical power acting on populations and the typologies of architectures (i. e. the hospital, prison, shelter, school) associated with those mechanisms. However, theorizing power dynamics at a systemic level differs from analyzing specific interpersonal exchanges. For example, the interaction between a "manager" and "guest" at a shelter operates at a smaller scale than macro discussions of architecture and governing populations. Foucault hints at a potential spatial marker for connecting exterior systems, and their associated architectures, with interpersonal encounters. Each

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<sup>8</sup> Ahmed tends to use these terms interchangeably, I find them both helpful, but I use arrival when I am trying to evoke the feeling or concept of approaching a threshold, a doorway, or a building.

<sup>9</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982* (New York: Picador, 2006).

encounter marks a threshold. Architecture makes meetings between exterior/interior more pronounced, but superficial “readings” of thresholds of encounter fail to account for the many power relays that exist within specific buildings, dwellings, or shelters.

The family emerges as a significant flex point in his analysis of power.<sup>10</sup> As Foucault challenges the repressive hypothesis in *The History of Sexuality I*, the family consistently emerges as a nexus where disciplinary power and intimate pleasures intermingle; a realm where the joy of wielding power is both exercised and evaded. Contrary to being a site of either restriction or expansion of the self, the family becomes enigmatic “*perpetual spirals of power and pleasure*.”<sup>11</sup> Highlighting relationships such as adult-child, doctor-patient, and educator-student, Foucault underscores a shared characteristic among them — the privileged position of proximity—the near. While these relationships vary in nature, their proximal nature<sup>12</sup> allows for unique forms of monitoring, distinct from broad state surveillance; the spatial intimacy between a doctor and patient, for instance, allows for tactile examination (palpation) that public health practices typically lack. “*Proximities*,” Foucault insists, “serve as surveillance procedures and function as *mechanisms of intensification; contacts that operate as conductors*.”<sup>13</sup> [emphasis added] Consequently, the family can be interpreted in terms of proximity and

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<sup>10</sup> He introduces the notion of the family being a nexus point, of sorts, between the formation of subjects at the social/state scale of power and the construction of normality at the personal scale of the family in *The History of Sexuality I*.

<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 45.

<sup>12</sup> Indisputably, “near” and “distant” name dynamics that are not easily dissected; they entwine, overlap, and jointly shape what might be termed an “architecture of proximity.”

<sup>13</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 46.

encounter. Familial ties, thus, are not merely social bonds, but spatial bonds as well. The degrees of nearness or distance between elements are essential components in power relations; the physical domain is integral to the mechanisms of intensification, alongside family kinship (chosen and unchosen).

The scalar, architectural analog to the family might be labeled “home.” We might extend limited notions of home to include shelters (dwellings might be a more adequate term) to highlight the overlapping of roles, rituals, and conditions of living in proximity, “under one roof,” and “in the same” building. (See Interlude 3 for a discussion of how charity and philanthropy incorporated “family values” into social work). Yet, “home” or “dwelling” appears overly broad and swiftly becomes decontextualized, and “house” is too isolated from its affective and relational networks.<sup>14</sup> In this chapter, I attempt to zoom into the scale of physical arrangements of bodies within and between rooms. I focus on specific architectural elements, such as the *corridor*, which can be found in a “home”<sup>15</sup> to examine more acutely how proximity is crafted, and how moments of interactions are pruned, trained, coaxed, and shunted by architectural interventions, material scaffolding, and immaterial gestures. Isolating parts of a building is intended to temper preconceptions about the nature of relationships formed within a particular building type by scrutinizing the more intimate, room-level forces at play.

### *Living in Proximity*

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<sup>14</sup> Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 1-2.

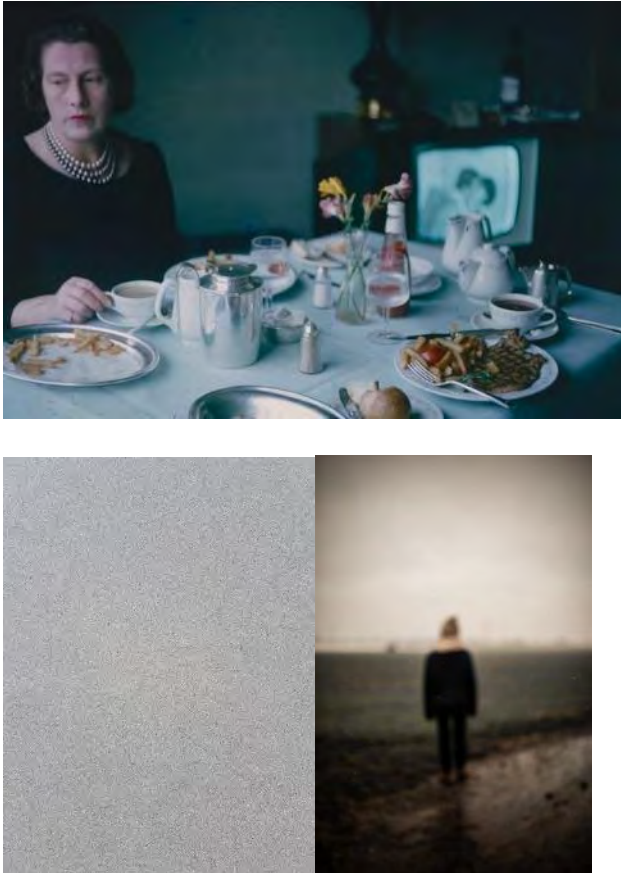
<sup>15</sup> Also, house/dwelling/residential building/” single-family home” in the United States. You may already sense the tenuousness of a definition such as a home that has a physical correlate.

What constitutes the defining features of nearness or proximal dwelling, and what emerges when we focus on encounters at this intimate scale?

*Proximity* transcends mere measurements of distance; it also encompasses relational dimensions. It introduces an element of intimacy that, while not yet defining a specific relationship, hints at the *potential* for interaction. This latent potential, a fusion of power and capacity, establishes a threshold where a tentative exchange of relational energies may begin. Which architectural or spatial qualities facilitate or hinder an attentiveness to the subtleties of relationships unfolding? What is proximal and peripheral to attunement? Does positional relation encompass the pre-encounter conditions—prior to the encounter's actualization, if it actualizes at all—in this context? Pre-attunement involves an orientation that later transforms, shaped simultaneously by its object of focus and diversion from others during reorientation. The act of redirecting one's perspective embodies this transitional turning. The directionality and intent intrinsic to attunement are influenced by the proximate environment. Movement, both affective advancement towards and retreat from the proximate, is intrinsic to the concept of proximity. It is crucial to note that mere neighboring, residing closely, or being in close proximity to another entity, be it human or nonhuman, does not intrinsically confer a moral or ethical status.

The architectural focus on the scales of rooms and corridors is purposefully oriented towards fostering shared atmospheres with the potential for touch, be it psychic, emotional, or physical. These scales also symbolize a temporal dimension. Spaces such as homes, rooms, and corridors often function as receptacles for proximate moments captured in memory—moments of time and bubbles of space. The moment's significance

is registered along these axes and "re-membered," not only in the cognitive centers identified by neuroscience but also in the body, in objects, and in the vibrant creative energy permeating each moment from a process perspective. This view considers each occasion as imbued with an open-ended energy of unfolding possibility, rather than a fixed event.<sup>16</sup>



*Figure 48 "Cinematic Photographs" open source from Unsplash*

Immersion in a moment entails a temporal-spatial transformation—dilating or contracting perception and awareness, decelerating or accelerating a sense of duration, or cleaving in a way that separates experience from its immediate surroundings. The

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<sup>16</sup> Note theopoetics and process establishing a speculative ontology on which notions of relationality, the event, and the moment reflect. The event (Whitehead) and the moment (Kierkegaard) deserve their own conversation in another paper or chapter.

material assemblies we co-inhabit morph into hindrances and instruments. We do not merely exist beside the walls that surround us, living parallel lives; they shape us and our proximities, facilitating certain intimacies while precluding others. However, inquiries surrounding the architecture of interaction and the mechanisms of exchange persist as exceedingly complex questions, laden with a multitude of variables that resist simplistic understanding.

### *Feeling Proximities*

In this chapter, the concept of 'nearness' is not merely a metric of distance, but a profound state of dwelling, lingering, living, and staying near—sometimes oppressively close, and at other times, achingly distant. Increasing nearness opens new fields of granularity that at times blurs, liberating us from the confines of visual dominance. The multiplicity of affects/relations that appear as a uniform experience or a consistent feeling can be imagined as if we were interacting with a single point in a Seurat painting that breaks from the composite scene of the constellation of points. Proximity disrupts typical sensory classifications, invoking haptic and, for some, synaesthetic engagement in an affective field of intensities that resists immediate consolidation into a unified image. Vision, often marked by precision and contrast, transcends the constraints traditionally associated with sight sovereignty. As one dwells with increasing nearness, proprioception, and subtle sensory cues become vital feedback to discern where one entity ends, and another begins—until even these boundaries begin to blur. The palpable proximity of ostensibly "inanimate" entities, such as a corridor wall that can simultaneously constrict, propel, support, or even suffocate, often diverges considerably from its designer's initial intention.

This observation may not strike architects or designers as revolutionary. Yet, when architects discover that their affective encounters with intimate spaces exceed the tools their training provides and that their interactions with material assemblies stretch beyond their professional expertise, pertinent questions emerge. How do they identify and mark the limits of their plans and visions? And further, how do they communicate these boundaries through material artifacts and public discourse, not through the language of spiritualized aesthetics, but in their document notations, labor structures, and design principles that enter renderings, bids, proposals, community meetings, client meetings, professional organizations, and political activities?

What are the limits of approaching a set of material conditions from an architectural point of view, which is to say, in the absence of encounters? For those with architectural or phenomenological inclinations, how can we understand the structural schism between subjective sensations and instrumental points of contact?<sup>17</sup> For example, the same object in the same event can participate in a cascade of very different, sometimes conflictual, sensations among bodies (the rope that binds, the needle that pierces, the press that holds, the hand that explores, the scalpel that cuts). The wall, in its simplicity as a membrane, can manifest infinitely varied qualities. It may maintain or rupture fields of intensity. It can apply pressure to the point of rupturing affective boundaries. And it can filter, absorb, reflect or resonate frequencies. The wall may also register as imposing or comforting. It could induce flow, stop processions, or orchestrate time through circulations. Then how might more intricate assemblages of corridors and

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<sup>17</sup> Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, 1987, see also, Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, Princeton University Press, (2013) 15.

rooms aggregated to the scale of a building come to collectively hold descriptors related to comfort, safety, and even sacredness? A space's formal and material qualities alone do not determine such descriptors - its lived-in, relational dimensions are equally important to comprehending its experiential nature. Encounters themselves characterize how space is perceived, felt, and understood.

How might we decode the interplay of lines, walls, and thresholds whether they are deliberately constructed or spontaneously experienced within the boundaries of a building, a corridor, a room, or across a table? What insights can we glean from these microcosms, both deliberately fashioned and spontaneously emerging? Given that architecture shapes specific patterns of circulation and movement, how do the material structures, like a wall, augment these encounters—not as entities marginal to corporeal bodies, but as integral components interwoven within the encounters themselves?<sup>18</sup>

It is crucial to note that these inquiries do not reside strictly within a familiar discourse on agency. The subsequent chapter will address the concept of agency and question the presupposition of distinct borders between subjects and objects. Agency becomes reoriented through new materialist viewpoints and process philosophy evident in the scholarship of individuals like Jane Bennett, William Connolly, and Catherine Keller.

## **HOME: WHERE THE SOCIAL AND THE PERSONAL MEET, MIX, AND SEEP.**

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<sup>18</sup> It is important to clarify that I am not framing these inquiries within a discourse of agency. The next chapter will address the language of agency and question the notion that clear boundaries that exist between subjects and objects, and where either active or passive characteristics predominate. The concept of agency is thoroughly complicated by new materialist perspectives and process philosophy—as exemplified in the works of scholars such as Jane Bennett, Karen Barad, William Connolly, and Catherine Keller, to whom I refer in the subsequent chapter.



The concept permeating discussions of homelessness, directly or indirectly, is "home." Yet, I hesitate to centralize it, as its essential meaning remains elusive. And by extension, it makes the state of its absence (homelessness) ungraspable. An entire book could be filled with pages of quotes about home. Each quote might hold a degree of truth, but they all remain fragmentary. This complexity renders the concept of home both perplexing in its ubiquity and enigmatic in its elusiveness. "The very regularity of home's processes is both inexorable and absurd. It is this regularity that needs focus and explaining. How does it go on being what it is? And what is it?"<sup>19</sup> After all, home, unlike house, is not automatically an architecture.

The concept of "home" is vast—perhaps too vast for the scope of the current discussion, especially if we consider Gaston Bachelard's assertion in *The Poetics of Space* that "all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home" is fractionally true.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, I need to establish some necessary boundaries around this concept to make it useful in this chapter. For instance, I am not referring to home as an ontological state of the human experience.

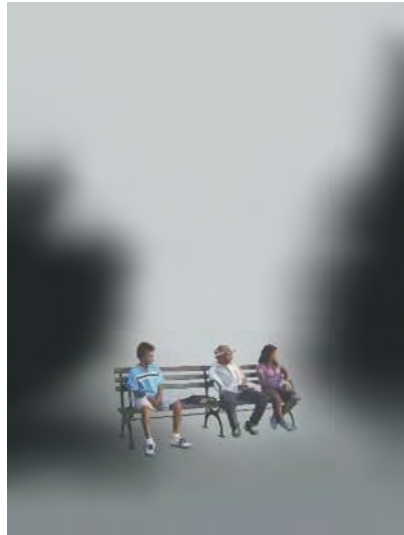
In the context of this dissertation, home rarely refers to an inner journey. I do not explore the infinite intimacy of our internal worlds of daydreams and imagination, akin to Bachelard. I do not attempt to chart the inner corridors of the psyche, the depths of our emotional reservoirs, or the crevices of our minds. Instead, the focus is on the interplay

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<sup>19</sup> Mary Douglas, "The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space" in *Home: A Place in the World*, edited by Arlen Mack (NY: New York University Press, 1993), 263. Originally published as, Mary Douglas, "The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space." *Social Research* 58, no. 1 (1991): 287–307. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40970644>.

<sup>20</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 5.

between bodies—human and nonhuman—engaging in what might be termed “inhuman intimacies.”<sup>21</sup>



*Figure 49 R Kyle Warren*



*Figure 50 R Kyle Warren*

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<sup>21</sup> Mel Y. Chen and Dana Luciano, eds. “Queer Inhumanisms,” *GLQ*, Duke University Press, Volume 21, Numbers 2-3, June 2015.

Investments in Sustaining a/the Home

Mary Douglas' essay "The Idea of Home: A Kind of Space" provides a relevant entry point into the complexity of the concept and the difficulty with attempting a definition, even a temporary and provisional one. Home cannot be defined by its functions.<sup>22</sup> And that has the implication that the home is not defined by providing "the primary care of bodies," "the education of the infants," and "the input of the labor market."<sup>23</sup> "As to those who claim that the home does something stabilizing or deepening or enriching for the personality, there are many who will claim that it cripples and stifles."<sup>24</sup> While some argue that a home provides stability, depth, or enrichment for one's personality, others contend that it can be confining, stifling personal growth and expression."<sup>25</sup> The very essence of a home is multifaceted, and its impact varies significantly based on individual experiences and societal norms.

There is a problematic line of thought embedded in sociology's theories of community and the home upon which it is built. These theories imply that the intrinsic sources of strength that the home and community possess are unanalyzable, "thanks to a kind of mystic solidarity home and small local community are supposed to be able to overcome the forces of fission that tear larger groups apart."<sup>26</sup> Douglas challenges this perspective, opting instead for a more pragmatic understanding of solidarity through

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<sup>22</sup> Mary Douglas, "The Idea of Home: A Kind of Space." *Home: A Place in the World*. Ed. Arien Mack (New York: New York University Press, 1993. 261-281, 262.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

empirical observation rather than reliance on theorization alone. She seeks to comprehend the strategies people employ when actively fostering solidarity in real-life settings. The desire to create solidarity foreshadows Ahmed's "happy family" discussion below.

Home need not be a fixed entity. It transcends merely being a shelter, a house, or a household. While home exhibits consistency in its furnishings and inhabitants, it does not automatically grant happiness. Home does not need to be fixed. Home is not having a shelter, having a house, nor is it a household. While home exhibits consistency in its objects and inhabitants, it does not guarantee stability, let alone happiness.<sup>27</sup>

Douglas says at a minimum, home has an orientation that is not merely directional but directs existence.<sup>28</sup> Ultimately the home's rules are "unpredictably waived and unpredictably honored, and never quite amenable to rational justification."<sup>29</sup> Douglas comes to the conclusion that home operates under a unique set of often paradoxical rules, with its edicts whimsically enforced or disregarded, seemingly without logic or coherence.<sup>30</sup> The theoretical question for Douglas becomes, how does a home manage "to demand and to get sacrifices from its members," and how does it create "the collectivity which is more than the sum of its parts?"<sup>31</sup> How are contributions to the sustainability of the home extracted?

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<sup>27</sup> Douglas, "The Idea of Home," 263.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, 264.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, 272.

<sup>30</sup> Douglas combines Suzanne Langer's theory of virtual with Robert Merton's theory of manifest and latent functions.

<sup>31</sup> Douglas, "The Idea of Home," 272.

The perpetuation of the home serves as its own rationale and its continuation relies on strategies that are fundamentally linked to its architecture. Coordination of work, access to resources, and distribution of movement requires visibility<sup>32</sup> and passages for circulation. If the flows and rhythms of domestic life are to function harmoniously with "rotation and synchrony"<sup>33</sup>, how can this be achieved in a home where the constant movement of its inhabitants in and out is not adequately taken into account and coordinated? The home exists as more than just a container of space - it is a living, interconnected system where the movements, decisions and responsibilities of its members intersect constantly.

The spatial organization within a home often signifies the distribution's fairness, items, and benefits. A person's position or status within the home might be mirrored by their access to resources or the space they occupy, making it a proxy for fairness.<sup>34</sup> This does not necessarily mean that the distribution is truly impartial, but rather that it might be perceived as such from an individual member's perspective.<sup>35</sup>

Visibility and transparency in the distribution process underscore fairness. Operations done in secrecy can breed distrust and discord. The home thrives when activities are transparent, subject to oversight, and communal. One intriguing aspect of domestic life is the multi-dimensional intent behind actions. Activities in the home

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<sup>32</sup> Douglas, "The Idea of Home: A Kind of Space,"., 274.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, 275. Douglas writes, "In a home there is no need to look for someone: it should be possible to work out where everyone is at any given time, that is, if it is functioning well."

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

seldom have a singular purpose. Asking why something is done a certain way may yield multiple explanations, each intertwined with the other, making the inquiry almost redundant.<sup>36, 37</sup> “Perhaps the most subversive attack on the home is to be present physically without joining in its multiple coordinations.”<sup>38</sup>

Douglas' portrayal of the home is not intended as an archetype but rather serves as an illustration of the challenges inherent in describing "home." Thus, while the term is tangential in this context many of the architectural elements are salient. Douglas, after challenging some prevailing assumptions about the nature of home, posits that a home is essentially a self-organizing entity that exists within a spatial framework. She contends, "home is located in space, but it is not necessarily a fixed space."<sup>39</sup> The key contributions are found in the reorientation of the questions posed to “home,” such as: What investments are necessary for its sustainability? What interests underlie its continuation? What spatial configurations and architectural compartmentalizations are needed to uphold contradictory and concealed rules that operate optimally without explicit articulation?

### *Being at Home/Feeling Home*

Significantly, according to architectural historian and theorist Beatriz Colomina, “Architecture is not simply a platform that accommodates the viewing subject. It is a viewing mechanism that produces the subject. It precedes and frames its occupant.”<sup>40</sup> The

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<sup>36</sup> Douglas, “The Idea of Home,” 280.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, 275.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, 263.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 250.

complicated moments of interplay between switches, channels, and passageways that flip positions of control in a series or at multiple intervals largely depend on the formation of the elements of construction that affect movement, perception, agency and vulnerability, belonging and unwelcome. The different scenarios complicate presumptions of friend/enemy, guest/host, at the scale of the home, and the architectural elements that arrange the relationships at a moment in time. Where the guest and host might be imagined as meeting at a threshold, a doorway, or a border, the meetings that take place inside a building among non-strangers are complicated and navigated at multiple levels of awareness.

What is the importance of thinking about a singular threshold at the point of exterior/interior and thinking about multiple thresholds creating shifting and varying positions of interiority and exteriority for co-inhabitants? For example, the “family-friend” can be described by the movement they induce at the moment of crossing the first threshold, or the second and third. The identity marker “family-friend” may grant access to spaces based on a set of relations but resisted by other relations; the movement through a house passes through complex fields of “being at home” where a member of the family is less at home than a friend of the family. The identification of guests and hosts might permit architectural access that ruptures the boundaries of intimacies one assumes come with a protective shell like the home.

If walls are designed based on both anticipated patterns of circulation and movement, and envisioned encounters at the conceptual stage, where does the purview of architecture conclude, and the realm of social interaction commence? Do relationships between bodies and their surroundings only take root when a space transitions to being

"inhabited"? Or do interactions between architecture and the body emerge from pre-existing and inherited inhabitation intentions? Practically speaking, and setting aside notions of responsibility for a moment, should a designer's involvement ideally conclude before a space is inhabited? If embodied interactions are integral to the intentional design of habitation, embracing both physical and ephemeral materialities (matter-energies), the question arises: How do anticipated proximities of bodies, potential encounters, and eventual contacts influence the collective conceptualization of cohabitation idealized in "the family"?<sup>41</sup> Desire to create familial solidarity is precursory to the subsequent discussion of Sara Ahmed's complication of "feeling at home" in relation to achieving a "happy family." Ahmed's exploration delves deeper into how notions of happiness and familial unity can routinely be constructed or orchestrated, rather than arising organically.

### FRICITION: A(E)FFECT OF ENCOUNTER

If we think of 'home' purely as proximity and familiarity, then we fail to recognise the relationships of estrangement and distance within the home. The opposition between being and the other, as with home and away, needs to be called into question.<sup>42</sup>  
—Ahmed

Sara Ahmed's theorization of spatial relationships offers a nuanced examination of the role the built environment plays in orchestrating the very potential or likelihood of an encounter. Ahmed's focus on the encounter is guided by the prioritization "*of encounters over identity.*"<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> This inquiry pertains to a range of architectural discourses, spanning religious, secular, and para-religious contexts, including places of refuge, safety, and charity.

<sup>42</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters* (Routledge, 2013), 139.

<sup>43</sup> Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 8.



Sara Ahmed's theories tether the relational and material aspects of this chapter. Ahmed serves as a pivotal intellectual guide for me, especially in navigating experiences of bodily-spatial awareness that are interwoven with processes that blur the body's boundaries between subjects and objects, inside and outside. Her work poses key questions and offers a conceptual vocabulary that helps differentiate the various systems operating at the scale of the body and interior architecture. Her scholarship uniquely bridges, on the one hand, critical analysis of discourse, identity, and power—namely, deconstruction, postcolonialism, and biopolitics—and on the other, exploratory ventures into materiality, biology, and ecology—such as phenomenology, affect theory, and new materialism. As a traditionally linguistic-based practice, the discipline of theology<sup>44</sup>—key to the present analysis—robustly integrates linguistic based theories, i. e. semiotics, hermeneutics, literary criticism, and deconstruction.<sup>45</sup> Bridge thinkers, such as Ahmed, help find ways of linking insights from seemingly disparate fields of scholarship and practice. Ahmed's work does not fit neatly within any single field. Although she has significantly influenced affect theory, her expansive disciplinary reach exemplifies transdisciplinarity, not for its own sake, but to better understand the spaces she occupies and the activism she practices.

Experiences are not innately disciplinary; they are disciplined post facto. They are interpreted retrospectively to guide forward planning, to make sense of perceived stimuli, and to extract meaning from a surplus of tangible and intangible information. We strive

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<sup>44</sup> Most immediately through the figure of the neighbor. I have included a short essay in the Appendix to this dissertation discussing theological and philosophical perspectives of the neighbor. See Appendix: Neighbor.

<sup>45</sup> At this point, my intent is not to critique, but rather to highlight how different areas of knowledge creation contribute to generating specific artifacts, tools, and modes of communication.

to render experiences comprehensible, despite their essentially being a collection of largely indescribable and elusive events. One form of discursive power manifests through the disciplines and practitioners who are eager and adept at systematizing events into reducible narratives. This process, which involves erasing the background and solidifying figures in the foreground, has a significant influence on collective interpretations of events.

However, Ahmed's commitment to sharing both her academic work and everyday experiences allows the background to come into focus.<sup>46</sup> By embracing experience, the "non-academic" objects, ideas, and environments begin to appear. Ahmed demonstrates a keen sensitivity to this background—the emotions, scents, and nebulous figures that are part of daily life. Each day, the world relegates people and things to the background, transforming some into banal objects, indistinguishable sensations, or specters beneath the threshold of detection of predominant modes of perception.<sup>47</sup>

The focus on architectural elements aims to magnify the anatomy of the encounter Ahmed called "a happening that brings things near to other things" and "a determination that might determine what gets near." This is achieved by bracketing the language used to label it (such as home, office, business, shelter, community-center, sanctuary) for the corridor, wall, doorway, etc. It is crucial to acknowledge, however, that exceptions abound in this framework and that the significance of contextuality is instrumental to this chapter's content. My reflections on encounters that take place in architectural settings are only activated in their particularity. I am attempting to provide language to the more-ness

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<sup>46</sup> Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 15.

<sup>47</sup> See Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

that takes place by looking at a particular element of the process of encountering. Ahmed refers to this moment of encounter as “simultaneous arrivals.” Her reference to simultaneity invites a spatial dimension reminiscent of Edward Soja’s argument for the simultaneous quality of space that offered new modes of historicization.<sup>48</sup> “Simultaneous arrivals are not necessarily a matter of chance,” Ahmed insists, “arrivals are determined, at least in a certain way.”<sup>49</sup> Far from arguing for a philosophy of determinism, Ahmed does insist on recognizing the actions of intensities, affects, and objects (such as corridors, passageways, and walls) that, “*at least in a certain way*, might determine what gets *near*. . .” (my emphasis).<sup>50</sup>

*Home is . . . the site of the guest/host encounter.*

The notion of guest/host and friend/enemy, while rooted in “face to face” encounters, offers an expansive framework that gets scaled up to the level of nation-states in philosophical and political discourses. Notably, Jacques Derrida leverages these concepts in his treatises on immigration, internal displacement, refugee status, and asylum rights, particularly in his works, *On Cosmopolitanism* and *Forgiveness and Of Hospitality*. He opens *Of Hospitality* with the question of the foreigner (*l'étranger*). This reflects the importance of considering scale in these discussions. The home does not translate smoothly into a nation-state; homeland presents a different lexicon and

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<sup>48</sup> Influential” spatial” theorist/critical geographer, Edward Soja, geographer argued for a “new mode of narration,” one which takes “into account ‘the simultaneity and extension of events and possibilities’ to make sense of what we see.” 22-23. Soja *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, New York: Verso, 1989.

<sup>49</sup> Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 39.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

identifying markers. A major challenge arises when extrapolating notions of hospitality to nation-states: the terms guest, host, and hospitality lose their nuanced intimacy, often failing to capture the multifaceted intricacies and opacities of particular homes. By focusing on architectural elements, the goal is to scrutinize the concept of home more deeply and the proximities they make possible/impossible.

In *Strange Encounters*, Sara Ahmed emphasizes the need to examine closely the histories and orientations of encounters that give rise to figures such as the stranger. For her, the idea of the stranger is conceived in juxtaposition to the notion of home. The affective register of a stranger's nearness (neighbor-ness) hinges on pre-existing constructs of home, guests, hosts, strangers, and neighbors. Inside/outside binaries and therefore concepts of guest/host that rely on these spatial distinctions, further unravel once we're inside the internal. The clear distinctions of inside/outside, and thus the guest/host dynamics that rely on these spatial demarcations between guest and host, start to disintegrate when we explore the intricacies of "internal" guests and hosts. Derrida's dissection of the binary between internal and external—manifested in the guest-host<sup>51</sup> dynamic through his combination of the words hostility and hospitality into the concept "hostipitality" is therefore enlightening.<sup>52</sup>

Life within the home consists of an intricate dance between what is internal and external. Derrida paints a vivid picture of this deconstruction at the juncture of

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<sup>51</sup> Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, 43. *hostis* as host or as enemy - an ambivalence in its etymology.

<sup>52</sup> Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, 43, 81, 125. "...based on the two Latin derivations: the foreigner (*hostis*) welcomed as guest or as enemy. Hospitality, hostility, hostipitality." "...they are both ...hospitable *inasmuch as inhospitable*." 81. "The guest becomes the host's host. The guest (*hôte*) becomes the host (*hôte*) of the host (*hôte*)." 125.

inside/outside, illustrating the apprehension of the host: the stranger, here the awaited guest, is not only someone to whom you say ‘come,’ but ‘enter,’ enter without waiting, . . . Crossing the threshold is entering and not only approaching or coming.”<sup>53</sup> Conventionally, neighbors are perceived as entities external to one's home. But if we perceive spatial organization based on the model of the home, and if the home is not a singular, impenetrable unit with a clear internal/external divide, what insights can be drawn from contemplating living in proximity, be it in other buildings, houses, or homes? Home, we might say, is the construction of relations through the manipulation of time and space. The home has architectural elements that when broken down have histories that tell us something of the types of relationships that are “permitted” in the home. I am speaking mostly of the development of home in the United States, informed through Western epistemologies about gender, sexuality, religion, ability, and race; materialized through politics, economics, and culture within the context of the United States.

Ahmed discusses the philosophical discourse surrounding ethics and responds to the language of “the Other” by arguing for a change of orientation. She focuses mostly on Levinas, but Derrida’s notion of hospitality is also a relevant point of contact, given his engagement with Levinas’ work on welcoming. Ahmed argues for moving away from the language of “the Other” to that of “the encounter.” The idea of the particularity of the moment of encounter comes into focus as a question of the modes of encounter by which one is faced. The insistence on identifying the particularity of the other moves to the

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<sup>53</sup> Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, 123. The ellipses include: . . .make a pause in our home without waiting, hurry up and come in, “come inside,” “come within me,” not only toward me, but within me: occupy me, take place in me, which means, by the same token, also take my place, do not content yourself with coming to meet me or “into my home.” . . .

particularity of the emerging encounter. Ahmed reminds us, “is partly about locating the encounter in time and space: *what are the conditions of possibility for us meeting here and now?*”<sup>54</sup> Ahmed argues that the significance of such an approach would be to “avoid assuming that we can gain access to the individual expression or the ‘real’ of her body.”<sup>55</sup>

Ahmed clarifies the point vividly and poetically:

We need to ask, not only how did we arrive here, at this particular place, but how is this arrival linked to other places, to an elsewhere that is not simply absent or present? We also need to consider how the here-ness of this encounter might affect where we might yet be going. To describe, not the other, but the mode of encounter in which I am faced with an other, is hence not to hold the other in place, or to turn her into a theme, concept or thing. Rather, it is to account for the conditions of possibility of being faced by her in such a way that she ceases to be fully present in this very moment of the face to face, a non-present-ness which, at one and the same time, opens out the possibility of facing something other than this other, of something that may surprise the one who faces, and the one who is faced (the not yet and the elsewhere).<sup>56</sup>

Ahmed’s use of encounters critiques psychologism, effacement of difference, and thematizing others as “the other.”<sup>57</sup> The encounter extends beyond the *instance* of the encounter. To do so would cut the encounter off from the histories and processes of production. Her focus on production presents a Marxist critique of the de-historicization of materials, leading to the creation of fetish objects. Simultaneously, it challenges the

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<sup>54</sup> Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, 144-5

<sup>55</sup> Ahmed continues, “In contrast, I would suggest that we need to complicate the very notion of the face to face by discussing the temporal and spatial dislocations that are implicated in the very possibility of being faced by this other. “(S E, 144-5). (Potential) futures intervenes into the present moment. Ahmed writes, “Given this, to discuss the particular modes of encounter (rather than particular others), is also to open the encounter up, to fail to grasp it. We have a temporal movement from the now to the not yet. We could ask, not only what made this encounter possible (its historicity), but also what does it make possible, what futures might it open up? *Strange Encounters*, 145.

<sup>56</sup> Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 145.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

de-historicization of subjects present in the encounter, a process that partially obscures their distinctiveness.

Strange encounters are an event of becoming. Ahmed describes in terms of power and history how the particular and the general become entangled. The face to face encounter is a microcosmos of entanglement that is constituted by past events. The moment of contact is in excess of the perceived material or the interpreted present. The space is not maximally deterministic of the event; however, the space-time of the event has influential properties of the event itself. It is a part of the organizing of the event of the encounter. The organization does require a force from the outside, but emergence theory has shown how self organization can emerge from a complex system.

Theologically, the unfolding of an event does not necessitate a God who shapes from the exterior, observing dispassionately from the outside like a cosmic Watchmaker. The Watchmaker metaphor, wherein God is seen as an external agent acting upon events, is not the *theos* of theopoetics enfolded with process philosophy (Keller); the cosmos is not akin to an orrery<sup>58</sup> crafted and acted upon by a purely external force labeled God.

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<sup>58</sup> An orrery is a mechanical representation of the solar system showing the relative distance and movement of the planets orbiting the sun. History of Science Museum, University of Oxford. <https://www.hsm.ox.ac.uk/orrery>



Figure 51 Astronomy: a large orrery, mounted on a dodecahedral base, decorated with signs of the zodiac. Engraving after B Martin. *Astronomy. Planetariums.* John Rowley (approximately 1668–1728). Contributors: Benjamin Martin (1705–1782). Work ID: xm44q3ud. Creative Commons Attribution (CC By 4.0)

The strange encounters Ahmed speaks about in her first book are “external” strangers: those others that are not considered a part of the inside (family or home). For instance, the strangers she refers to are the objects of Neighborhood Watch Programs. The strangers recognized as strangers “function to establish and define the boundaries of who ‘we’ are in their very proximity.”<sup>59</sup> The spatial dimension is key in the becoming of nearness, in the event of neighboring, dwelling in proximity. Space is not deterministic

<sup>59</sup> Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 2-3.



but is a key, and literal, dimension. In most instances, the border (determined through politics and solidified through materiality i. e. a national border) is imagined as in place at the time of arrival, but the boundary (not permanent and can be material or immaterial) is a particular marker that makes a “border of sorts” (in place but not necessarily permanent) between inside and outside which most often coincides with a door and a doorway. The wall, unlike the more transient doorway, embodies a more enduring aspect of division and materialization. The doorway is a threshold of course, and employed in hospitality discourses, but it lacks particularity. It is cut off from the histories of materialization and arrival. The doorway is also a door frame, but the latter seems less interesting or dynamic for poetic or philosophical discourse. I imagine this to be the case, or perhaps there is a different reason for its absence in discussions of thresholds of hospitality.

The literal is not as dynamic or mutable as the metaphorical. But sometimes we’re “stuck” with the literal. We see, therefore, how these physical structures – walls, borders, and doorways – shape our interactions with and perceptions of the stranger/neighbor. These constructions, both literal and metaphorical, define the boundaries of ‘us’ and ‘other,’ inherently influencing the dynamics of neighboring and dwelling in proximity. While the literal may not always carry the philosophical allure of the metaphorical, it is in these tangible manifestations – the solid walls and the demarcations of doorways – that we often find ourselves contending with the reality of the stranger/neighbor, navigating the complex interplay of nearness and distance in the fabric of our everyday lives.

Hospitality holds an internal/external, insider/outsider, structure<sup>60</sup> While the language of host and guest have a *figure* position, the pair also possess an internal spatial dimension embedded in the relationships constructed by and also constructive of the relative terms of proximity and distance. However, the particularity of architectural elements reframes discussions of encounter, movement, circulation, proximity, and home. Fortunately, Ahmed provides some additional conceptual tools in *Queer Phenomenology* and “Happy Objects” that will help to welcome architecture into the conversation of dwelling near. *Near* will become a flat description of dwelling in proximity through a conversation about orientations and becoming *in proximity*, for example, nearness is asymmetrically “sticky” for some bodies.

“The face to face of this encounter cannot, then, be detached or isolated from broader relations of antagonism: to do so, would be to forget how the possibility or impossibility of some face-to-face encounters is already determined. It is here that my thesis on the priority of encounters over identities meets its limits: we must pose the question of historicity, which is forgotten by the very designation of ‘the encounter’ as such.”<sup>61</sup> In her book, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*,<sup>62</sup> Ahmed discusses the significance of hallways as spaces that shape our experiences and interactions. She examines how hallways function as more than mere transitional spaces but rather as sites of power dynamics and social encounters. Ahmed's approach is not a

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<sup>60</sup> Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 2.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, 9.

<sup>62</sup> In *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed's use of the theoretical concept of *queer* rests on the idea of “sexual orientations” that diverge from the norm, or what she comes to identify phenomenologically as the foreground. The background, therefore, is a site of queer perspective.

rebuttal but rather a complement to the poetics of phenomenologies of space, as evidenced by her selection of phenomenology as a conceptual marker. She enriches the discourse by queering it, steering phenomenology's focus towards the intricacies of power, privilege, and difference that coexist in a room with objects (exemplified by Husserl's table).<sup>63</sup> By integrating the spatial dimension into discussions of proximity, hospitality, and encounter, and by queering these concepts, Ahmed not only enhances our understanding of these interactions but also foregrounds the often-overlooked power structures embedded within them. Her work, particularly in *Queer Phenomenology* offers a critical lens through which we can view the everyday architectures that shape our experiences, interactions, and perceptions.

### *Feeling (Un)Home(d)*

Ahmed considers experiences of being marked as “out of place,” “out of line,” not “feeling at home,” or sensing the atmosphere “in the room.” Objects are no longer tables and chairs; she is discussing the home and the room. Linking the concept of atmosphere to her earlier discourse on objects and emotions is crucial for developing an integrated understanding of how proximity, movement, circulation, inheritance, atmospheres, and histories of production are interconnected elements in the realm of architecture. Briefly, in “Happy Objects,” Ahmed offers the notion of “sticky objects” as a way of discussing the movement between objects. The “sticky-ness” refers to the elements of affects that

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<sup>63</sup> Bachelard's phenomenological hallways of the mind also inhabit embodied movement through hallways, bounded by walls, and bracketed by doorways.

impress upon us, press to the point of marking, and affect the movement toward or away from the objects due to the circulation of impressions.<sup>64</sup>

Sticky is not primarily stuck or static, although some bodies are made to be stuck in place, rather sticky describes an interaction that happens outside the body, not an internal characteristic of the object that makes it sticky or ultimately stuck. Her example of a happy object is the family, which makes it useful for thinking about the scale of the home. What obstructs the happiness found in the pursuit of the family, as a happy object, is viewed as a barrier to that happiness and therefore an unhappy object, which she notably uses the example of the feminist killjoy to demonstrate. The feminist killjoy stops the idea of happiness and is seen as the source or cause of the family's unhappiness rather than seeing how the unhappiness is a condition on the part of the constructedness of the family. Ahmed's use of "stickiness" extends beyond mere physical adherence; it encapsulates the relational dynamics and emotional entanglements around entities like the family. The perception of obstruction, exemplified by the figure of the feminist killjoy, is not inherent to the object, but the killjoy is so routinely and closely identified with a felt emotion, it seems to "stick" to that individual and fails to "stick" to individuals who are aligned with the pursuit of the happy object, such as a frictionless family unit.

Looking more closely at the elements of the home, rather than at the concept of home through the image of the family, helps to conceptualize the production of proximity as a slightly different angle of arrival. After all, Ahmed argues, "how we arrive, how we

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<sup>64</sup> W. Anne Joh, in "Love's Multiplicity: Jeong and Spivak's Notes toward Planetary Love," develops the Korean concept of jeong to deepen notions of emotion and love that fail to adequately translate jeong to English. Joh, "Love's Multiplicity: Jeong and Spivak's Notes toward Planetary Love" in *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*. Edited by Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

enter this room or that room, will affect what impressions we receive. After all, to receive is to act. To receive an impression is to make an impression.” (HO, 36-37) Ahmed’s theories of public affects, queer orientations, and sticky objects might seem, at first glance, to be incompatible with a structure perceptively static such as a wall or a corridor. The threshold is given some flexibility but only as a break in the wall, which maintains the perception of solidness. Thresholds privilege space over architectural elements; but they are not free from the structure of walls, hallways, and doorways.

So we may walk into the room and ‘feel the atmosphere,’ but what we may feel depends on the angle of our arrival. Or we might say that the atmosphere is already angled; it is always felt from a specific point. The pedagogic encounter is full of angles. . . . Having read the atmosphere, one can become tense, which in turn affects what happens, how things move along. The moods we arrive with do affect what happens: which is not to say we always keep our moods. Sometimes I arrive heavy with anxiety, and everything that happens makes me feel more anxious, while at other times, things happen that ease the anxiety, making the space itself seem light and energetic. We do not know in advance what will happen given this contingency, given the hap of what happens; we do not know ‘exactly’ what makes things happen in this way and that. Situations are affective given the gap between the impressions we have of others, and the impressions we make on others, all of which are lively. (37)

Her work is incredibly insightful for analyzing the dynamics of the rooms we find ourselves in and for making sense of the different sensations we feel. Her work helps us to realize that not feeling at home is not a random event; there are histories of materiality that function to create atmospheres. She also gives language for understanding the politics involved in the matter of feelings. Without connecting sensations and emotions to politics, the hierarchies of organization and the control of institutional operations have ways of ignoring, discounting, and even making suspicious accounts of sensing inequity and violation (See Ahmed’s latest book *Complaint!*). But in order to capitalize on

Ahmed's theory of feeling what is in the room, I'd like to think more about how we come to arrive at this or that room.

## CONTROLLING CONDITIONS: CORRIDORS, WALLS, AND DOORS<sup>65</sup>

The history of the corridor as a device for removing traffic from rooms has yet to be written.

—Robin Evans, "Figures, Doors, and Passages," (1978)

Léopold Lambert's starting point for his architectural analysis in "The Politics of Narrowness: When Walls Tighten People" is the corridor. His approach to the politics of the built environment, how power acts on bodies, is counterintuitive because he states clearly that he is beginning with the uses of corridors, but only with their physical properties. Lambert describes his arrival at looking at the "fundamentals" of "the corridor." He references the significant work completed by Robin Evans and the historical research Stephan Trüby completed alongside the 2014 exhibition Rem Koolhaas curated, titled "Elements of Architecture," for the 14th International Architecture Exhibition at the Venice Biennale.<sup>66</sup> Lambert points to the gap he seeks to fill in his essay and the political implications for such a redirected focus. He writes, "Although Trüby's historical exploration of this architectural invention gives us a significant account of the various uses that have been made of the corridor, it is regrettable that his study does not go back to the 'fundamentals' of the corridor itself."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Léopold Lambert, "The Politics of Narrowness: When Walls Tighten on Bodies," in *The Avery Review*, no. 11 (November 2015), <http://averyreview.com/issues/11/the-politics-of-Narrowness-when-walls-tighten-on-bodies>.

<sup>66</sup> 2014. Rem Koolhaas was the co-curated of the Biennale that year.

<sup>67</sup> Lambert, "The Politics of Narrowness."

He decides to begin by focusing on the construction of the corridor's fundamental materiality and political function rather than on its intended uses and design sensibilities.<sup>68</sup>

Although the corridor has a rich cultural and symbolic history, I will adopt a rather simple if not simplistic approach to define it here. We tend to think of a corridor as a narrow space that allows bodies to go from a point A to a point B and vice versa. This definition will be useful, but I would like to propose another one that helps us to understand how it is the bodies are made to move.<sup>69</sup>

Lambert's careful framing of his approach to the subject is informative of how simplicity does not necessarily mean reductionism. By simplifying the corridor, he allows for increasingly layered understandings of the corridor that actually show the complexity of an often reduced structural element. The lamination of structural forces, vector fields, and bodily affects allows us to appreciate the collision of foreground-background dynamics, the intertwining of past and present, and the organization of potential yet uncertain microfutures.

Let us consider the corridor as a space that tends toward the maximization of its wall surface for a given area. . . A large surface of wall therefore tends to offer an increased control over the bodies in comparison to a smaller surface. A square room tends to restrict the possibility of action for the bodies it hosts less than a longer and narrower one (a corridor) does.<sup>70</sup>

When broken down to its simplest descriptions, the architectural "thing" itself, the corridor in this case, is not epistemically shattering. Nor is it expected to be. To varying degrees, people have an intimate knowledge of corridors, hallways, passageways, and

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<sup>68</sup> This methodology also allows us to focus more on architecture's political effects than on its original intentions. fn.1

<sup>69</sup> Lambert, "The Politics of Narrowness."

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

thoroughfares. While we intuitively understand the limiting function of corridors, these limiting or directing effects rarely receive special attention in philosophies of hospitality and theories of relation. For example, a statement theorizing about interpersonal relationships includes what those interactions consist of, and I assume are imagined in terms of an unnamed space—unknown to the reader. If I describe a neighborly event, even in granular detail in terms of the face to face encounter, the constellation of possible outcomes would need to take into account Lambert’s assertion that “a square room tends to restrict the possibility of action for the bodies it hosts less than a longer and narrower one (a corridor) does.” We might then read a statement describing a neighborly event in a square room (call it encounter □) and then in a corridor (call it encounter ||). The potential proximities of and orientation toward human or nonhuman<sup>71</sup> objects change. Already, in a simplified description of two spaces, assumptions, and unnamed variables persist. Epistemologies and histories further influence the coordinates of the □ or ||. “We suppose here that these walls, like the overwhelming majority of those that surround us, have been built in such a way that the energy required to change their position or undermine their structural integrity is greater than the energy that an individual body can muster without tools.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> I am not suggesting another binary. The inclusion of both terms assumes readers imagine either human subjects or nonhuman objects. A more detailed discussion would explain the lack of clear boundaries between the two seemingly distinct worlds of humans and things.

<sup>72</sup> Theopoetically, if God is imagined as an infinite source of possibility, the incarnational outcome is not purely random or absolutely infinite—it may be, according to chaos theory, “practically random,” but not “truly random.” Micro-events taking place at the scale of a particular corridor are not typical examples of a dynamic system—the *weather* was Lorenz’s founding model for chaos theory.



Therefore, let's think of corridors as “narrow directional spaces allowing the movement of bodies from a point A to a point B, and vice versa. The framing of this space by lateral walls ensures that the movement can only be accomplished from A to B and vice versa due to their physicality.”<sup>73</sup> You can imagine a number of scenarios where the movement is influenced by outside institutional forces from degrees of influence to the most extreme forms of control. But for the moment let's go at the pace of Lambert's discussion of the corridor as allowing for movement from point A to point B and vice versa. Therefore, when the architects, engineers, technocrats, and developers trace the lines that will become walls forming corridors, they anticipate the bodies' movement from A to B and from B to A.

Such anticipation cannot be done without there being a preexisting interest in allowing bodies to circulate solely between these two spatial points. For the moment let us assume the space is intentionally drafted and it is not a makeshift or loosely materialized corridor. Lambert opens up the corridor to include a hallway that aids a house's inhabitants to move from one room to another. However, as in most of his writing, he is interested in the political forces operationalized and weaponized<sup>74</sup> through the built environment—in particular technocratic and militaristic uses of architecture. One of the types of corridors Lambert uses in his example is a passageway across a border. In this article, he is talking about the movement of Palestinian people from

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<sup>73</sup> Lambert. “The Politics of Narrowness.”

<sup>74</sup> Lambert, *Weaponized Architecture: The Impossibility of Innocence*, DPR-Barcelona, 2013.

Palestine to Israel at Israeli checkpoints.<sup>75</sup> A corridor that has a direction no longer has reciprocity of movement—there is one entrance and one exit. Corridors that lead to a checkpoint manage the flow of bodies and act as a mechanism for data collection and surveillance. For example, a corridor can terminate at a turnstile—a built valve that controls the direction of flow while also individualizing and registering bodies. The corridor facilitates movement and the walls do not need to be parallel; they can shrink as the corridor progresses. The shrinking has the effect of forming a single line without the need for verbal direction or explicit consent. The formation of a line has flow, as mentioned earlier, which is a phenomenon that has characteristics beyond a chain of singular bodies. The movement can be at the pace of a step and can have moments of pause, but the overall movement continues.

You can be still and still caught in the flow of things, even when those things are beyond your immediate perception. While waiting to move through the corridor, “human bodies no longer exist as individual identities but, rather, *a fluid mass that the technocratic corridor undertakes to canalize*. At its end, our individuality is reestablished by an exiguous turnstile, and our *identity is reattributed in its administrative form and its control*. The turnstile is what ensures the unidirectionality of the movement implied by the corridor in Lambert’s example. The turnstile translates a human body into a data point. The movement of a complex body turns the gate triggering a single click or blip, at its simplest turned into a number. The more information that is registered, does not equate to a reassembled body; it is not a transportation device. The sensors measure, the

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<sup>75</sup> The other example Lambert gives, and the one with which he seems less familiar is Temple Grandin’s slaughterhouse designs. I do not think the description Grandin’s work is as successful for Lambert’s argument.

observers observe, and the data points are translated into information that circulates. The parts of ourselves that are most relevant make their way to their destination in order to become productive (in a Foucauldian sense).

### Architectural Circulation

Lambert's focus is a strategic conceptual move that comes with plenty of risk. The most evident risk lies in his intentional dampening of bodies in his approach—a risk he discloses. He writes, "*I am aware that such a literal understanding of architecture eludes the entire symbolic and cultural dimension of this discipline*"<sup>76</sup> (emphasis added).

Although such an approach can appear reactionary at first glance, it is my conviction that the organization of bodies in space through the materiality of architecture remains the most implacable political manifestation of the discipline.<sup>77</sup>

The purposeful bracketing of bodies could be read as an erasure, but it is a method that ultimately shines new light on how bodies are affected by structural elements. By not beginning an analysis of the corridor with its intended use, he shifts focus away from the intentionality of the designer. Thereby allowing for seeing how the function of the corridor based on its dimensions and materiality provides a way of action on bodies apart from any administrative intent.

I am however voluntarily eluding such an important dimension since it presumes a universal understanding of its meaning and therefore excludes bodies that do not register within this universality. *The approach here is instead resolutely oriented toward the materiality of the encounter between architecture and bodies.*

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<sup>76</sup> Lambert, "The Politics of Narrowness."

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*

Lambert recognizes architecture in essence is neither oppressive nor liberative. However, architecture and its agents are political.<sup>78</sup> “Bodies do not simply find themselves within the spatial technology embodied by the corridor; their very presence is the result of a system whose political degree can vary from almost innocuous to the most explicit forms of racism.”<sup>79</sup>

Here lies the delicate balance between a methodology that first considers bodies for what they are, i.e. living material assemblages surrounded by other material assemblages (some of which we call architecture), only later to consider bodies for how they are normatively marked, to inscribe our thinking within the complexity of a reality with variable degrees of violence.

Lambert promises to stay with the fundamentals of the corridor, but for good reason, he moves quickly to consider politicized architecture. To provide more detail, it is helpful to turn to one of Lambert’s influences, Robin Evans’ 1978 architectural history of corridors in “Figures, Doors, and Passages.” In this essay, Evans traces the emergence of residential thoroughfares in European architecture to the late 16th and early 17th centuries.<sup>80</sup> It is notable that the appearance of corridors in the architectural record arose in the residences of affluent families that were large enough to accommodate (or demand) the corridor. Superficially uncomplicated architectural elements participate in the organization of dynamic interactions. From Evans’ architectural point of view, reworded

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<sup>78</sup> While architecture extends beyond the construction of material walls, Lambert includes, “It is my conviction that the organization of bodies in space through the materiality of architecture remains the most implacable political manifestation of the discipline.”

<sup>79</sup> Lambert, “The Politics of Narrowness.”

<sup>80</sup> Robin Evans, in “Figures, Doors, and Passages,” writes, “[The passageway] makes its first record appearance in England at Beaufort House, Chelsea, designed around 1597 by John Thorpe. . . on the plan was written ‘A long Entry through all.’”

in the language used in this chapter, Evans shows how the flow of bodies, their orientation in space, and their angle of arrival are molded by passageways.

If anything is described by an architectural plan, it is the nature of human relationships, since the elements whose trace it records - walls, doors, windows and stairs - are employed first to divide and then selectively to re-unite inhabited space. But what is generally absent in even the most elaborately illustrated building is the way human figures will occupy it.<sup>81</sup>

The passages “coalesced to form a *penetrating* network of circulation space which *touched* every major room in the household.”<sup>82</sup> Evans intuitively registers the affective qualities of these lines/walls turned passageways. (emphasis added) Sir Roger Pratt's design notations for the Coleshill, Berkshire residence (c. 1659-67) show passages connecting grand and back stairs to common areas, circulating through the house. These spaces, akin to a vestibule, served as re-orienting spaces interior to the house, connecting the interior while existing parallel to the rooms where “the inhabitants lived their lives,” just on the other side of the passage walls.<sup>83</sup> In the plans of the houses for the rich, “the inhabitants” excluded “the servants,” or had the dream of excluding them. The dream could not be fully realized by the rich, it could only approach it, because the work provided by “the servants” was needed while their subjectivity should be diminished as much as possible. Evans captures the architectural solution to the paradoxical “servant

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<sup>81</sup> Robin Evans, “Figures, Doors, and Passages,” 56-57. Evans continues, “This may be for good reasons, but when figures do appear in architectural drawings, they tend not to be substantial creatures but emblems, mere signs of life, as, for example, the amoebic outlines that turn up in ‘Parker-Morris’ layouts.” 56-57.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, 70

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, 71

problem – the problem of their presence being part of their service<sup>84</sup> The arrangement of corridors and alternative entries consigned “servants to a limited territory always adjacent to, but never within the house proper; where they were always on hand, but never present unless required.”<sup>85</sup> Architecture provided a practical solution for an approximation of that arrangement. According to Pratt,

the “‘common way in the middle through the whole length of the house’ was to prevent ‘the offices [i.e. utility rooms] from one *molesting* the other by continual passing through them’ and, in the rest of the house, to ensure that ‘ordinary servants may never publicly appear in passing to and from for their occasions there’.”<sup>86</sup> ...to keep them out of the way of gentlemen and ladies. There was nothing new in this fastidiousness, the novelty was in the conscious employment of architecture to dispel it. . . . (emphasis added)<sup>87</sup>

Evans explains the architectural precursors taking place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries became fully incorporated into Victorian residential architecture. But Evans purposely stopped short of providing a smooth linear progression of architectural design that was in conscious lockstep with shifting family and class dynamics. For one reason, it is impossible to say definitely if one was the progenitor of the other. It is also incorrect to determine that the spatial configurations evolved in a strictly rational way.

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<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, 73

<sup>85</sup> Evans, “Figures, Doors, and Passages,” 71.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*

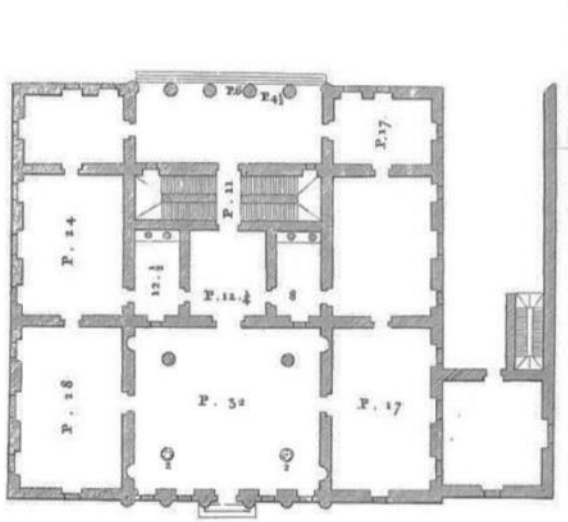


Figure 52 Palazzo Antonini, Udine. Andrea palladio, ca 1556.

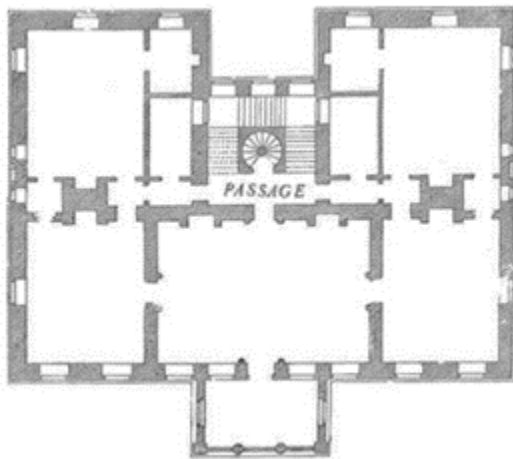


Figure 53: Amesbury House, Wiltshire. John Webb, ca 1661.

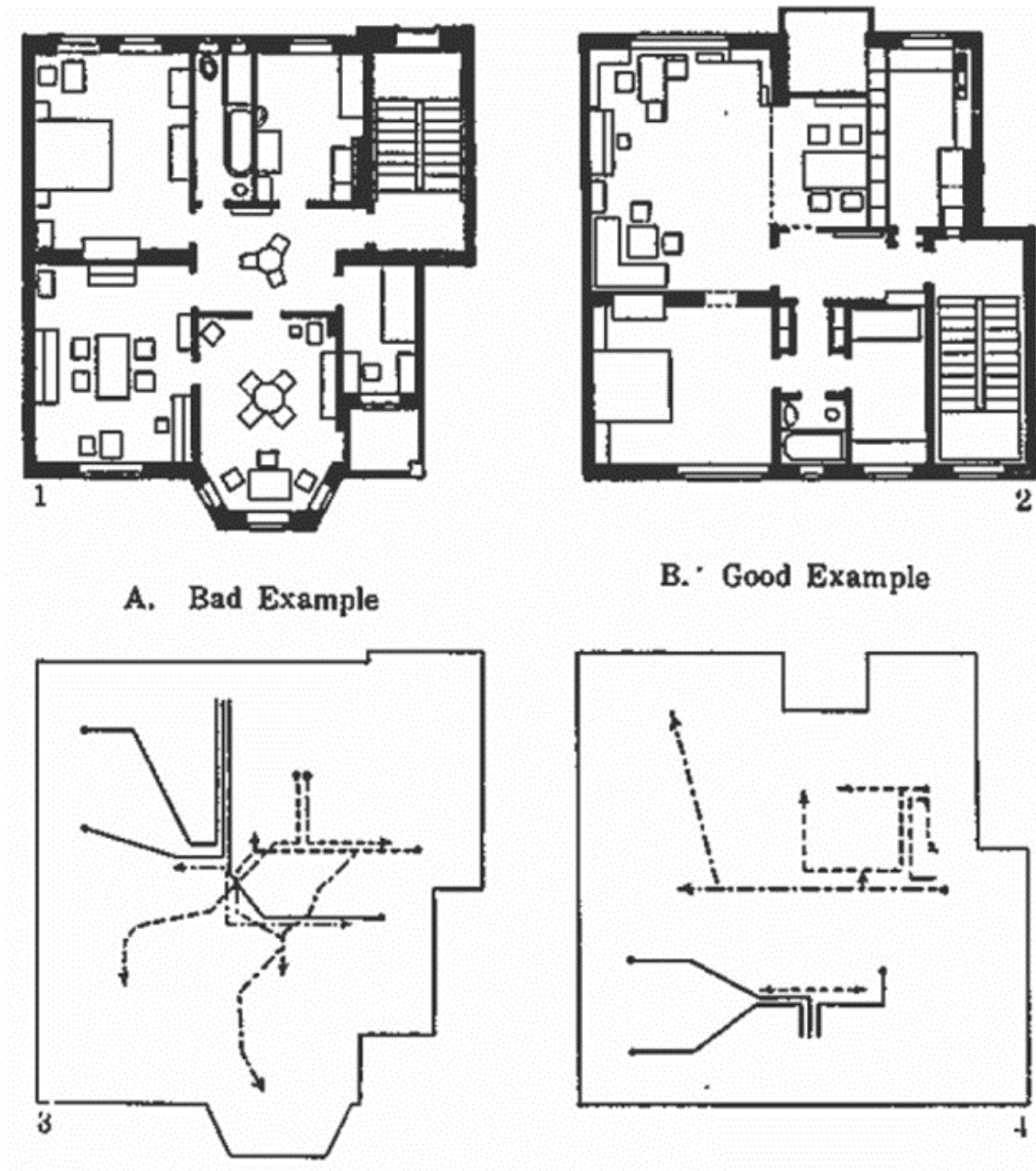


Figure 54 Alexander Klein, *The Functional House for Frictionless Living*, 1928.

The nineteenth century ideals of a placid and disciplined domestic sphere solidified the use of divided and organized space. The Victorian ethos of morality, privacy, and decorum served as a shield against the perceived carnality of the body. Similarly, the Puritan belief linked the flesh with sinfulness, impurity, and corruptibility. These ideologies were so deeply ingrained in society and culture that they influenced the



development of architectural friction control techniques. Consequently, these structural arrangements have become so pervasive and embedded in our spaces that they now represent unnoticed norms in spatial organization.<sup>88</sup> But the desire for clear separation coincided with architectural solutions to problems of relation. Evans explains, “‘interference,’ as if from the architect’s point of view all the occupants of a house, whatever their social standing, had become nothing but a potential source of irritation to each other.”<sup>89</sup>

Dividing the house into two domains - an inner sanctuary of inhabited, sometimes disconnected rooms, and an unoccupied circulation space. . . making it difficult to justify entering any room where you had no specific business. . . it is hard to tell now which became more private first, the room or the soul. Certainly, their histories are entwined.<sup>90</sup>

Evans identifies an additional in-house split, that between beauty and function. This does not mean that “form follows function” already ruled decision making as soon as architect Louis Sullivan pronounced it in 1896. The phrase more directly influenced functionalist and constructivist modernist architecture. The quest for beauty shaped different choices: sometimes they conflicted, at other times they reinforced one another.

. . . the integration of household space was now for the sake of beauty, its separation was for convenience – an opposition two distinct standards of judgment for two quite separate realities: on the one hand, an extended concatenation of spaces to flatter the eye...on the other, a careful containment and individual compartments in which to preserve the self

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<sup>88</sup> Evans’ added, “Puritans talked of ‘armouring’ the self against a naughty world... (74) (Cotton Mather)...how hard it is to distinguish morality from sensibility...(74) best to avoid the paying or receiving of any unnecessary or ‘impertinent’ visits. To prevent useless intrusions, he inscribed in large letters above the door of his room these admonitory words: ‘BE SHORT.’” (75), 74-5.

<sup>89</sup> Evans, “Figures, Doors, and Passages,” 73.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, 75

from others.<sup>91</sup> This split between an architecture to look through and an architecture to hide in cut an unbridgeable gap dividing commodity from delight, utility from beauty, and function from form.<sup>92</sup>

Evans argues the application of independent access via passageways arose suddenly and not gradually out of vernacular forms. He does not claim a sure reason for the sudden change in attitudes about the body's exposure to external and internal household encounters, but he ventures to identify the growing Puritanism occurring in England.

And in this there is another glaring paradox: in facilitating communication, the corridor reduced contact. What this meant was that purposeful or necessary communication was facilitated while incidental communication was reduced, and contact, according to the lights of reason and the dictates of morality, was at best incidental and distracting, at worst corrupting and malignant.<sup>93</sup>

For the “apostles of modernity” two solutions to the growing retreat from the body remained. “The first was to dissipate the clammy heat of intimate relationships by collectivizing them; the second, more applicable to the house, as it turned out, was to atomize and individualize and separate each person yet further. . . . From a certain angle they appear remarkably alike, so it was quite logical for Le Corbusier, Hilberseimer and the constructivists to use the individual private cell as the basic building block for entirely new cities in which all other facilities would be collectivized.”<sup>94</sup>

The title of Alexander Klein’s 1928 proposal presented to a “German housing agency” is a testament to the intransigence of the fear of the body. Even as Klein and other modernist architects sought to break away from the stifling 19th-century mores, he

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<sup>91</sup> Evans, 74

<sup>92</sup> Evans, “*Figures, Doors, and Passages*,” 74.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, 84, cf. fn. 21

ultimately employed modernist techniques to achieve careful orchestration of proximities. Neighboring objects, rooms, and passageways demonstrated by “flow-line diagrams” were designed with certain ideas of familial, or familiar, neighboring. As the flow lines show, figures “remain entirely distinct and do not touch at all; paths literally never cross. Klein called his design, “The Functional House for Frictionless Living.”<sup>95</sup> The added psychologism of twentieth-century interrelationships began to give more language to the realm of privacy. The desire to identify violations of psyche and self, captured by the imagined envelopes of *proxemics* that made such boundaries appear immutable and natural, had obvious design solutions for the control of behavioral and psychological collisions, “What better than to design things so that no such violations would ever occur?”<sup>96</sup>

The care with which modern architects atomized life should not be mistaken as a sign of putting safety first, although that is the language that has a lot of purchase. Care and comfort tell partial and distorted stories. Caring for one form of interaction does not guarantee that care is distributed equitably or purely. To truly understand care and safety within spatial configurations, it is crucial to follow the materiality of spatial conditions. This approach helps identify functionality and reveals how abstractions and rhetoric like

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<sup>95</sup> As the flow lines show, figures “remain entirely distinct and do not touch at all; paths literally never cross. The journey between bed and bath – where trod the naked to enact the rawest acts of the body – was treated with particular caution and isolated from all other routes.

Implied ... “that all accidental encounters caused friction and therefore threatened the smooth running of the domestic machine: a delicately balanced and sensitive device it was too, always on the edge of malfunction. But however, attenuated this logic appears to be, it is nevertheless the logic now buried in the regulations, codes, design methods and rules-of-thumb which account for the day-to-day production of contemporary housing.”

<sup>96</sup> Evans, “*Figures, Doors, and Passages*,” 88.

'care' and 'safety' can sometimes be misleading. Care and safety come only as attached to subject and object figurations. Caring for frictionless living is care of the Self as central, isolatable, and free. The Self in self preservation assumes not everyone will be safe and cared for, who or what is the center of proxemics do not register equally, if at all.

Sociability is characterized by the potential for unknown interactions, where the element of unknowability gives rise to the possibility of complex and contradictory exchanges.

“The modern conscience,” Evans determines, “found this kind of sociability suspect, thinking it an excuse for promiscuity or a sign of degeneracy, and replaces it with socialization, which is something quite different.”<sup>97</sup> 88 The identification of danger, or potential danger, does not make one an effective strategist for risk aversion.

Saying that proximity, in general, is potentially dangerous, does not make one capable of its elimination or prevention.<sup>98</sup> Because many things vital to life are *pharmaka*, the identification of danger depends on one's orientation. The identification does not necessarily have an effective causal link to a proposed action or creation. Not only is the question of “for whose benefit?” a vital disruption for such a notion, but the action and creation also do not have an unlimited number of tools at their disposal. Our tools are not fine enough to construct space creatively enough to match the entanglement of life.

The protection from violence matters and the freedom of movement matters. However, safety and care do not operate as both protector and liberator. Safety and care in their cultural and historical contexts are not the elimination of violence and control—they involve a negotiation of some forms of violence and control over and against other forms

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<sup>97</sup> Evans, “*Figures, Doors, and Passages*,” 88.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid*, 88-9.

of violence and control. The arbiters, those in positions to create, move in the direction of power. The Victorians, Puritans, and modernists (“modernity itself was an amplification of nineteenth-century sensibilities”<sup>99</sup>) desired privacy and used the language of morality and virtue. Just as socialization is not the same thing as sociality, privacy is not the same thing as solitude. This pursuit of privacy, under the guise of morality and virtue, became a tool of power, subtly shaping societal norms and individual behaviors to align with collective ideals. The *imposition* of privacy does not simply equate to an escape into reflective solitude, but as a means of exerting control and maintaining the status quo established by these influential groups.

[Architecture] is employed more and more as a preventative measure; an agency for peace, security, and segregation which, by its very nature, limits the horizon of experience. . . <sup>100</sup>

Evans published “Figures, Doors and Passages” four years prior to *The Atlantic* published George Kelling and James Wilson’s article “Broken Windows.”<sup>101</sup> Evans’ work could be seen as anticipating how the order of proximities in dwellings would translate to the order of proximities beyond the dwelling to include the scale of the neighborhood. Evans’ curiosity about architectural elements’ unique participation in the socialization of dwelling in proximity diagnosed a situation still relevant today. His analysis identifies a problem we have inherited and expanded. The observation he made can be translated to a different scale, but attention to the scale of the elements within a building has a history

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<sup>99</sup> Evans, “*Figures, Doors, and Passages*,” 88.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, 90.

<sup>101</sup> Wilson, James Q.; Kelling, George L. (March 1982). "Broken Windows". [www.theatlantic.com](http://www.theatlantic.com). Retrieved August 2023.  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/>

that is useful for what shapes near dwellings, the limitations, and the possibilities. This path of following the throughlines of architectural detail is an incomplete account of proximal dwelling, and it is not the only method of discussing neighbor-ness. It “may not be the only way of reading plans,” but, introducing the reading of plans, in this case, may offer something more than a commentary on architecture “from the outside” (and the use of architecture as symbolism) by “clarifying architectures' instrumental role in the formation of everyday events.”<sup>102</sup>

The use of architecture as a blocking or inhibiting mechanism facilitates the biopolitical spatial arrangement featured in chapter two. However, internal movements do not readily lend themselves to a critical lens developed at the sociological level. Infrastructures of confinement, security, and public health can be seen directly motivated by: “reducing noise-transmission, differentiation movement patterns, suppressing smell, stemming vandalism, cutting down the accumulation of dirt, impeding the spread of disease, veiling embarrassment, closeting indecency and abolishing the unnecessary; incidentally reducing daily life to a private shadow-play.”<sup>103</sup> But the private shadow-play is an extension of the social, but not a direct translation.

But on the other side of this definition, there is surely another kind of architecture that would seem to give full play to the things that have been so carefully masked by its anti-type; an architecture arising out of the deep fascination that draws people towards others; an architecture that recognizes passion, carnality and sociality. The matrix of connected rooms might well be an integral feature of such buildings.<sup>104</sup>

*Care Brings into Proximity, Comfort/Friction Affect What/Who is Near*

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<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, 89.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, 89-90.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*

In Ahmed's most recent book, *Complaint!*, her careful documentation of the politics of a complaint in an institutional setting comes the closest so far to a commentary directly addressed to architecture. That is not to say architecture is her main concern or even the most significant driver in the processes she is describing. She begins engaging architectural thinking in *What is the Use?*, where, for example, disability and design scholar-activist, Aimi Hamraie,<sup>105</sup> is an important interlocutor for Ahmed's questioning of the "use" of architecture for the construction of access. Hamraie's "normate template" helped Ahmed begin to connect more intentionally with design.

However, in *Complaint!*, you begin to sense the actual architectural elements that are combined into a place that has a sustained presence throughout her book. The architectural elements are consciously brought to the foreground alongside the organizing themes. Ahmed does not pursue an "architectural critique," but architecture is more noticeably a part of the processes of how an institution works and how people to varying degrees are moved, stopped, silenced, or dismissed. Ahmed remembers how "walls" caught her attention while she was talking to diversity practitioners: "brick walls, institutional walls, walls that work to convey how we come up against the institution when we try to transform an institution. If walls came up in my project on diversity, doors have kept coming up in this project on complaint."<sup>106</sup> Doors are a significant site of

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<sup>105</sup> Matthew Allen, Interview with Aimi Hamraie: "Designing for Disability Justice: On the need to take a variety of human bodies into account," Harvard GSD, 2021.  
<https://www.gsd.harvard.edu/2021/02/designing-for-disability-justice-on-the-need-to-take-a-variety-of-human-bodies-into-account/>

See also, Aimi Hamraie's podcast *Contra*\*

<sup>106</sup> Ahmed, *Complaint!*, 175. ebook

marking. Signs with words have overt messaging of exclusion, but unmarked doors communicate and impress as well. The unmarked door is often the “master’s door,” while the marked door is the “servants and tradesmen” door.<sup>107</sup> “Doors are not just physical things that swing on hinges, although they are that, they are mechanisms that enable an opening and a closing. These mechanisms are not always obvious. A door can even be closed by appearing to be open. The diversity door is such a door...”<sup>108</sup> The diversity door is much more than a literal door, but she takes care to remain tethered to the literal doors, offices, and stairwells that have appeared in the stories she recounts in *Complaint!*.

It is tempting to progress quickly to using the door as a metaphor, which is useful and Ahmed does this well, but her work is significant in that she gives space and attention to “how actual doors are evoked in accounts of sexual and physical assault” before moving on to how “academic networks, collegiality, forms of loyalty can function as doors.”<sup>109</sup> I think it is significant to connect everyday metaphors, or figures of speech, to their physical counterparts. Rather than limiting the ability of a metaphor to do its work, it can aid a metaphor’s potential to pierce the veil covering reality. The expression “behind closed doors” can be taken for granted as a matter of fact, a simplified of sharing the status quo operations we assume we have a common experience of, but the physical door, the one that a person is pressed to or the door whose closure is increasing the pressure in a particular room, might have a unique ability to “sink” in. The sensory

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<sup>107</sup> Ahmed, *Complaint!*, 176.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*, 177.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*



connection to materiality requires a movement that touches [A sort of architectural Barthes punctum; for Barthes “punctum is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole. . . The *punctum* of a photograph is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me).”]<sup>110</sup> Absence of the particularity of the sensory makes it challenging to leave the realm of convention, and to account for what is effortlessly accepted, but in a way that bypasses awareness or friction. The arrangement of things can slip by, be noticed, and not be confronted. We are differently confronted with these elements. Ahmed explains that racism can be felt as what confronts one and does not confront the other, because the experience of whiteness lies behind. The smoothness of things is an indication that it is behind, it follows and is not something that has to be faced because the world is arranged for less friction in the experience of whiteness.

Whiteness can have “at-home” properties external to a home. A reflection on the concept of home can tell us more about the unspoken relationships of proximity that are assumed to be absent outside the home. The change of setting also requires an understanding of what makes a space less or more home, the bodies less or more at home, and if home is something to be pursued at all. If elements of a home are present, and notions of proximity and familiarity are present, do they function to sustain a place, an institution, or a way of organizing that is tied to other elements that might move in different directions for different people? For example, the tethering of home to house “works” for some and “controls” others. Does the work of a comfortable space work for some and not work for others? Are people then held in place and even do they find it

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<sup>110</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, 27.

necessary to participate in the life of the place because of a complex negotiation of other wants, needs, and desires?<sup>111</sup> What additional layers and pressures arise when the building in question has a stated purpose and is supported with resources that can be exchanged at the discretion of organizational leaders?

When home is portrayed as synonymous with comfort and safety, or imbued with a sacred aura, the language surrounding it tends to obscure the complexities of spatial affects and power dynamics inherent in the historical process of normalizing the concept of home. It contains referents (schemas of houses, shelters, buildings, collectives, and families - chosen, arranged, biological, fluid, etc.), but is not so overly referential that it runs out of uses (exceptions to the promises of home do not disprove the rule). Home is so ubiquitous and amorphous, that it is hard to imagine what holds it together. What allows it to “do work” in the world? For home to do work, it has to be flexible and act as a gatekeeper. Too rigid and it would break, and too ambiguous it would lack cohesion. The productivity of home, both in discourse and in material terms, necessitates a combination of these elements to make it adaptable and valuable within a specific order. Expressed goals of the utopian space of home, do not secure the convergence of imagination and actualization. Yet, the attendant instability holds potential in its versatility. Like veritable conceptual stem cells, concepts performing in such unstable ways ‘hold out the most potential to develop multiple, new ways.

It is not quite a belief on the order of theological claims, but it has similarities, each concept possessing amounts of dogma and structural tethers. What keeps the idea of

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<sup>111</sup> Lauren Berlant’s concept of “cruel optimism” might help think through these issues even further, although she does not speak directly to architecture and place as often so there needs to be some additional bridge work. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Duke University Press, 2019).

the church as a sanctuary intact? Even in the theologies of the church as a people, the assembly carries the mark of sanctuary, a place protected and a place that provides protection. However, the general perception of sanctuary hides the history of sanctuary developed over long periods of negotiations between law and religion. The *res sacrae* of the church was a political process (See *What Makes a Church Sacred*). Similarly, the idea of home has evolved in relation to legal and religious considerations. Who does the home belong to? And who is afforded protection and from what? There was never absolute welcoming, protection, or hospitality without debate, friction, and splintering.

Home, apart from a singular or encapsulated thing, might be thought of as a nebulous nexus, a field of attraction and expulsion—an oscillation between semiotic and material realms. At each moment fields might be aligned or divergent. We have different angles of attraction and repulsion, arrival and departure to the same phenomena—such as a dwelling. Therefore, home at any moment consists of absence and presence.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, the language around thresholds that mark spatial and identitarian directionality is limited. I am arguing that in addition to, not in opposition to, feminist postcolonial and diasporic scholarship, a deeper engagement with architectural elements and arrangements helps force clarifications about the forces present in a particular space that is unique to the scale, context, and histories of proximities.

Architecture aids and is aided by Ahmed's attention to detail in the room. Thinking of room-affects and architecture together opens up possibilities to intervene in the processes that create the built environment, and not just to criticize the ones that are

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<sup>112</sup> Michael Faraday, 19th century British scientist who describes the electric and magnetic fields as "lines of force."

already in place. It begins critique at the moment of creativity and therefore lives in a future position and not only in a reflective position. There seems to be an in-between that is unaccounted for between the moment the design of the building is “handed over” to the occupants or managers of the buildings, and the moment of critique and response of events that happen in the institutionalized building.

### **CONCLUSION: ASSEMBLING NEARNESS, CONSTRUCTING PROXIMITIES**

The application of labels such as "architect" or "theorist" to typify fields can be restrictive when discussing spaces that defy categorization by specific domains and are apprehended only through a particularized set of sensory mechanisms or interpreted through a language codex. The linguist and the designer may not be immediately linked through education, profession, or technology, but they are linked by poiesis, acts of becoming, and circuits of transmission/transformation (transmission in an assemblage involves transformation) that permeate space—contrary to conceptualizations that correlate space with emptiness.<sup>113</sup>

The impact of a linguistic act can vary based on the positionality of the subject encountering it. When one aligned with dominant norms faces a language act seemingly beneficial, it triggers cascading effects that ease their navigation of "paths of least resistance." Less energy is expended, and the movement may be experienced as a kind of slipstream. However, for those existing outside such norms - like queer or non-subjects - language may either undermine its stated intent or cause the potential subject to double, struggling amidst discourse while resisting its effects to preserve their irreducible

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<sup>113</sup> See Stengers and Latour. Also see ANT (Actor Network Theory).

identity. Promises of empowerment through language instead become statements negating life. This calls into question the very conduits carrying discourse. A single linguistic act can thus spawn two contrasting sets of ripples - ones of coherence reinforcing the subject, others of decoherence that undermine marginalized potential subjects.

Words like "home" suggest comfort, "shelter" implies safety, "nest" indicates nurturing, and "shell" denotes protection. Yet, relying solely on language alone leaves these concepts vulnerable to revelations that language alone is not sufficient to secure the ideas they represent.<sup>114</sup> *Architectures of language*, cognition, collectivities, rituals, stasis, and movement aid in the ordering of chaos, of elemental effects that lack the coherence to convert themselves into meaning. The concept of place becomes a crucial component in constructing the notions of home and shelter, and, consequently, the state of being without a home or shelter. Language can simultaneously act as a tool for creating action and reinforcing reality, particularly for those connected to sovereign power. The sovereign's language can quicken a subject's destruction. If a subject is "in-line" to benefit from the linguistic performance issued from the sovereign, the language motivates a cascade of reactions that "go-with-the-flow," encountering less opposition to their own becoming.

Thinking between theopoetics and architecture, what might a discussion emerging from "the in-between" look, sound, or feel like? The in-between is a contested space experienced differently, which power asserts to be an orthodox reality, but which actually

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<sup>114</sup> The statements themselves, a series of sounds and shapes, are easily identified as abstractions that threaten material processes but need architectures to transmit them.

comprises heterodox realities.<sup>115</sup> Theopoetics of architecture thus becomes an experiment, pairing organisms with affinities for sensing the texture of lines, spectrums, and fiat boundaries with makers skilled at assemblies and knowledgeable of ordering systems. These pairs might intervene in moments of mutual creative imagination, grounded in material conditions.<sup>116</sup>

To foster co-interventions, both the body and the building must be perceived as more flexible than ordinarily imagined. Disciplinary and conceptual boundaries benefit from softening in order to understand how their solidity is not uniformly experienced across different positionalities. The constants we use as shortcuts to move through the world cannot be taken for granted or assumed to be absolute. Constants like distance and doxa are variables in broader calculations, fluctuating in relation to other bodies—they are relative.

It is admittedly challenging to conceptualize concreteness as being entangled with fluidity and flows. Conceptually, they resist conflation and remain in their respective realms. In binary thought, the two might be consequently related to each other, but they are often imagined taking on alternate roles of subject and object. Perhaps alternating, but

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<sup>115</sup> The gap between what we say and what we do is a complicated space to work in. But as a queer person raised in a conservative environment studying theology, I have learned to embrace and cultivate new ways of seeing to help ‘make-sense’ by valuing sense. The in-between is a helpful position to work from as I sort out the mad-inducing experiences of deciphering what people say from what people do.

<sup>116</sup> And for theologians and philosophers, its challenging to remain for long on the simplest or more literal and physical definition of a threshold. Architects, however, are well suited for talking about a specific material threshold in both its possibilities and its materializations, the “practical things.” Theologically and philosophically a threshold lends itself to a host of interpretations given its spatial, liminal, transitional, immaterial nature. Poetics of thresholds are not limited by the metaphysical presence of a built threshold and speak of presence in absence more adeptly than the typical training an architect requires. Disciplinarily speaking, however people rarely exist disciplinarily. In reality, people move across (im)material conceptual bounds, but the professional and educational roles do not necessarily call for it and professionalization and autonomy (and litigation, insurance, and regulations) require a hardening of knowledge-expertise silos.

rarely symbiotically subject or object, subject-object. Typically, in this binary, the body stands in position as the mover-the actor, and the structural elements of a space are moved, and acted upon. Therefore, while they may work together or act in close proximity or even a relation, they remain distinct and therefore conceptually require us to alternate from a body, person, the subject, or sociality to the object, structure, physical, or materiality. The objects become objective, and the bodies are subjective. In chapter four, I will discuss how the concept of the moving subject or movement itself leads to ableist, gendered, racialized, and anthropocentric norms of agency, capacity, will, and civility. But in this context, I am highlighting the body-building relationship to get to a discussion of power at different scales of proximity and particularity.

INTERLUDE THREE

OPERATION CLEAN SWEEP:

GROUNDING MATERIAL ECOLOGIES

First there was an attack on a Suffolk County House of Corrections officer, followed by a Boston Police Department action called "Operation Clean Sweep," which resulted in 34 arrests.

—Chris Citorik Walter Wuthmann, *WBUR*<sup>1</sup>

That opening line of Chris Citorik’s article captures the proliferation of events that were narratively linked to a single causal event involving a limited number of individuals. The linkages between cause and effects, which still reverberate as of today, December 2023, are difficult to assemble—making it nearly impossible to address in the pursuit of social justice in a heavily contested territory in Boston.

The following excerpts are from a Boston Globe article published hours before the deployment of Operation Clean Sweep on August 1, the day before WBUR published Citorik’s article—one of many news reports and social media posts. The account made it

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<sup>1</sup>Chris Citorik Walter Wuthmann, “The Aftermath Of ‘Operation Clean Sweep,’” *WBUR*, August 13, 2019 <https://www.wbur.org/radioboston/2019/08/13/aftermath-clean-sweep>, see also, Simón Rios, “Police Sweeps Put Focus On Area Of Boston’s South End,” Updated August 09, 2019. <https://www.wbur.org/news/2019/08/09/melnea-cass-mass-ave-sweeps>

“Following an alleged assault on a correctional officer last week, Boston police swept the area around Melnea Cass Boulevard and Massachusetts Avenue, arresting many individuals and telling homeless people there to head out.”

(See Interlude three)

“On Aug. 6, the Boston Police Department drew national attention for destroying wheelchairs of homeless residents in the trash compactor of a garbage truck as family and friends begged officers to stop. It was the sixth night of “Operation Clean Sweep,” a series of raids targeting Boston’s transient community living along a stretch of the South End known as the “Methadone Mile” or “the Mile,” named for its concentration of health infrastructure serving people who use opioids.”

Jonathan Ben-Menachem, “Pulling back the Curtain on Clean Sweep,” *The Appeal*, Aug 15, 2019.



possible to easily and quickly summarize the developing events represented by Citorik's opening line. The comments from Mayor Walsh reflect the tethering of place to a loose logic of responsibility and display the justification for future responses by security officers.

“While [the correctional officer was] in his car on Atkinson Street, a person reached through the open window and struck the officer. . . . Once outside of the vehicle, it is reported that he was surrounded by multiple people who began to strike and attack him,” the [BPD] statement said.

In a Thursday statement, Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh said, “The safety and well-being of the people in this city is my highest priority. I am confident that Boston Police will conduct a comprehensive investigation to get to the bottom of this incident. I wish the person involved a quick recovery.”

Thursday's attack occurred not far from the intersection of Melnea Cass Boulevard and Massachusetts Avenue, an area that is known as “Methadone Mile” because of its association with recovery services.

Walsh's office on Thursday acknowledged the neighborhood is a “highly transited area” because of the concentration of recovery and shelter services.

The office said Walsh has “significantly increased public safety presence in the area, increasing directed patrols, extending patrol hours, and training officers in de-escalation techniques for individuals struggling with mental health or substance-use disorder.”

Boston police, according to the mayor's office, will “be further increasing directed patrols in the area.”<sup>2</sup>

To investigate the suspected violation of people's civil liberties, The ACLU of Massachusetts sued the City of Boston for the release of records associated with the coordination and execution of “Operation Clean Sweep.” The ACLU did not receive

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<sup>2</sup> Travis Anderson and Danny McDonald, “Suffolk Jail Officer Attacked in Attempted Robbery on Way to Work, *Boston Globe*, August 1, 2019, 12:37 p.m.  
<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2019/08/01/suffolk-jail-officer-attacked-outside-facility-before-shift-started-robbery-suspected-motive/aUB4PQAd2Ne9EzedPOkWiM/story.html?event=event12>

information from the first day of the sweep, August 1. The lawsuit included some of the records the city did release that were from “August 2, the “second night of operation clean sweep” from Captain Jack Danilecki, who was apparently in charge.

At 9:12 p.m. on August 2, 2019, Captain Danilecki reported:

“Sir/Ma’m We conducted scaled down version of operation clean sweep tonight We had service unit from D-4, C-6, B-2 and State and Sheriff ride around mass, Cass and southampton st and we moved the homeless and a drug abusers and had them go back to Atkinson st Atkinson st was a ghost town And there was not a lot of people in the neighborhoods nor on street Found some under Xway ramp at mass and large group on Cass All cooperated and went to Atkinson st.”

The night of August 6, 2019, began with Captain Danilecki reporting:

“Sirs/Ma’m We did Operation Clean Sweep tonight with BPD, State, Sheriff’s, DPW and needle clean up crew Very busy night Very productive D-4 had most population Garbage trucks are invaluable to us, strong deterrent for them to set up camps We had civilians in green traffic vests following us on bicycles videotaping us All good ... no issues.” This elicited a response of “Great job Jack. Thank you” from Massachusetts State Police Major Ball.<sup>3</sup>

There were many holes in the actions taken in the days after the reported attack.

The ACLU subpoena for the release of records explained that the only information they received included “cryptic and brief summaries of actions,” like the two cited above, and included:

no pre-operation planning or coordination documents, no actual police reports, no arrest logs, no property seizure logs or records, no communications between the Boston Police and City Hall or the other departments or agencies engaged in the “Sweep,” and no documents from the Department of Public Works or the Mayor’s office are included with regard to the requests specifically related to “Operation Clean Sweep.”

The gaps in records and artifacts leave questions and create a barrier for the critical analysis of the territorialization of the area that includes the location of the city-

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<sup>3</sup> It’s unclear from the information released why officers were relocating people to Atkinson St.

[https://www.aclum.org/sites/default/files/field\\_documents/20190924\\_aclum-v-boston.pdf](https://www.aclum.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/20190924_aclum-v-boston.pdf)

run shelter, 112 Southampton. The challenges of seeking justice for vulnerable populations through the weaponization of seemingly neutral objects—such as garbage trucks being used for control—resonated with some of the issues architect Eyal Weizman has identified in his practice, *Forensic Architecture*. In the following, I look at the events of Operation Clean Sweep through the lens of material ecologies.

The events of Operation Clean Sweep highlight tensions amongst individuals experiencing homelessness, individuals seeking treatment for substance use disorder, service providers, advocates, residents, and business owners in geographies colloquially referred to as “Mass and Cass.”<sup>4</sup> The dynamic frictions of lived experience unfold in public spaces entangled in a field of social, political, economic, and spatial conditions.

Public spaces are sites of negotiating claims over the city that often disproportionately impact marginalized groups. Moreover, these multiple claims to space puts into question the legitimacy of calling a space public. Using the lens of spatial-social construction, I work to explore some of the theoretical frameworks that could help uncover, understand, and re-present the agents, actors, and forces at play in the geographies of Mass and Cass and similar public spaces in cities.

Reductive place-based or singularly attributed issue-based narratives obscure the complexities of lived experience. Instead, as in the case of Operation Clean Sweep, they illustrate how power differentials shape which presences and lived experiences become normalized or criminalized within contested urban terrains. I seek tools to reframe and

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<sup>4</sup> In this dissertation, I reject stigmatizing toponyms and will instead, tentatively, refer to these geographies as “Mass and Cass.” “Mass and Cass” has become a tool of political discourse and policy making. An alternative does not resolve the issues of power embedded in naming a place and while planning and programs commonly refer to “Mass and Cass” to evoke a collection of “problems” associated with this area, I will use it here as an index of geography and as an attempt to move towards less stigmatizing language.

rearticulate geo-social-spatial narratives that unequally affect people living without stable housing. A critique of language demonstrates how terminology transfers stigma and codifies the figures of homelessness. Analyses of "sticky objects" and "persistent affects" examine how attention and care are redirected from structural issues over time. The recognition of expanded agencies, assemblages, and frameworks of spatial justice complicate straightforward causal accounts and encourage a more nuanced reading of events and their unequal impacts.

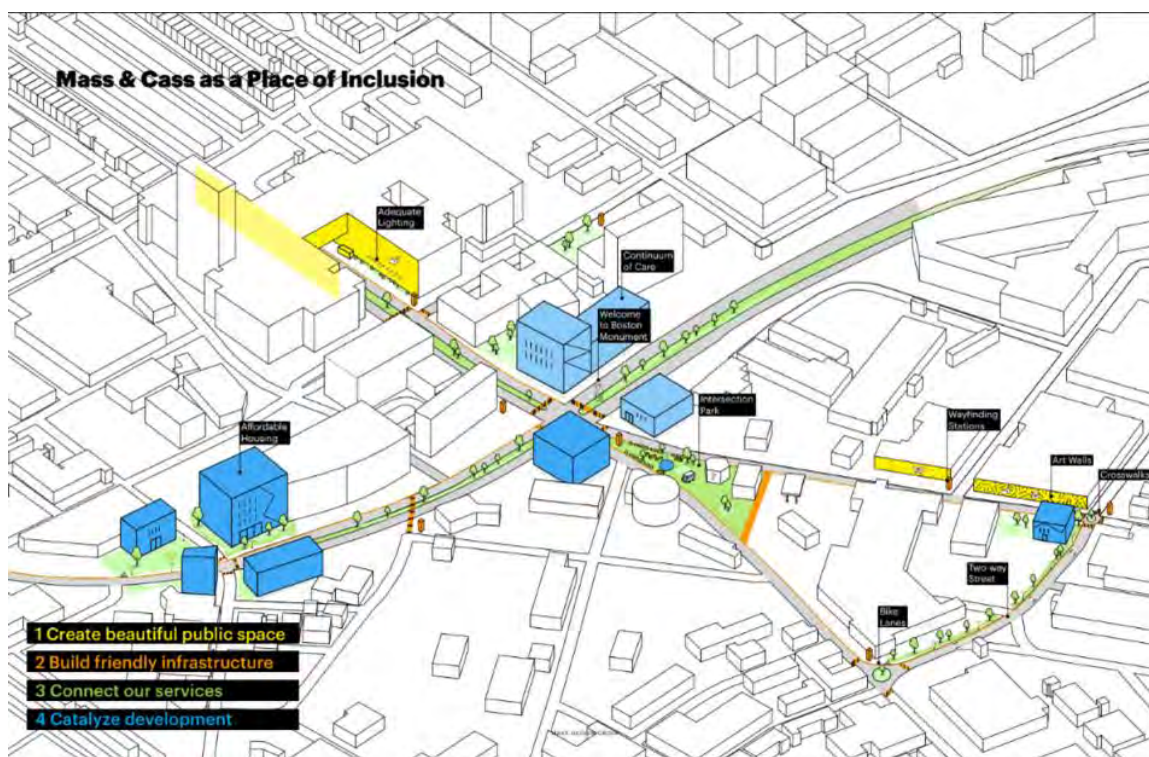


Figure 55 “Mass and Cass as a Place of Inclusion” recommendations showing four recommended design solutions. Diagram published in a Mass and Cass research report conducted by MASS Design, BAC, and RISD students.

## OPERATION CLEAN SWEEP

On August 2, 2019, the city of Boston mobilized multiple city departments in the policing and expulsion of individuals experiencing homelessness at the boundaries of Boston’s South End and Roxbury neighborhoods. In a coordinated effort by police and public works departments, people were displaced, personal belongings were seized and destroyed, and multiple arrests were made. Citing an incident of violent crime against a Suffolk County corrections officer, the city legitimized the self-named “Operation Clean Sweep” as part of “an effort to address ongoing community concerns in the general area of Massachusetts Avenue and Southampton Street in Roxbury” (Dwyer, 2019).

The combined efforts of city departments led by state and local police – decidedly not health practitioners or social workers – deployed “Operation Clean Sweep.” The

“operation” stretched over several days and led to multiple arrests. The threat of arrest - i. e. for not showing I. D. or refusing to relocate – functionally displaced people and acted as a deterrent from returning to the area surrounding Boston Medical Center and Southamptton Street Shelter. Over the span of 6 days and nights, arrests targeted individuals in a particular public space, those in proximity to Southamptton Street Shelter, Boston’s primarily city funded emergency shelter and the default location of many of those displaced from the 2014 closure of the Long Island Bridge. These actions resulted in the ACLU of Massachusetts suing the city of Boston for the violation of individual civil rights that included illegal seizure of property and police profiling.

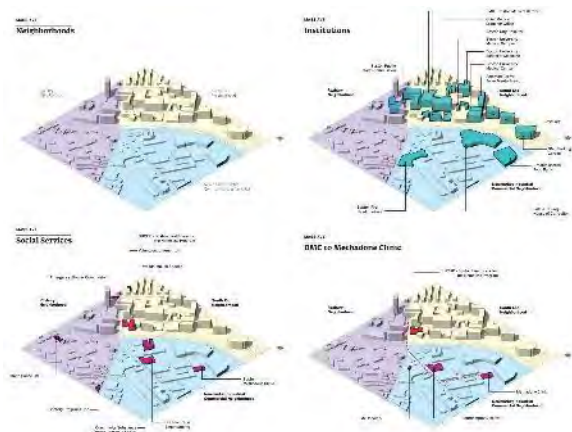
Sweeps themselves are not a new tool used by local governments. And the name Operation Clean Sweep is doubly redundant. Sweeps as they have occurred in US cities included the coordinated efforts of law enforcement and public works departments. Sweeps clearly signal a desire for a transformation from “dirty” to “clean.” While the people involved argued it was a unique response to a single event, there is an established history of using sweeps as a tool for poverty management through seizure and destruction of property and forced displacement.

The Massachusetts State Police and the BPD were evidently emboldened to title their coordinated maneuvers with stark transparency. “Operation” reflected the coordinated instrumentalization of the city departments. “Clean” is not a thinly veiled code for a stigmatized population seeking care from hospital programs and social services. “Sweep” declares the intent to use tools for the removal of objects. The result was the removal of people, aided by coded language that maintains the gap of recognition of human life. But based on the events that occurred over several days, the

operationalization of “sweep” speaks less to a savvy communications strategy to label the operation than as a civic service project to remove litter from the sidewalks. While lack of references to life has the effect of hiding bodies, it speaks more to the lack of recognition of what is human and what counts as a life.



## NARRATIVES AND PLACE



After the event, in the vacuum created by opaque policy agendas or motivations, a flurry of news reports and social media posts constructed a complicated series of narratives to fill the gap. Headlines signaled the mounting problems of “Methadone Mile,” the “troubled district” surrounding Boston Medical Center (BMC), and reductively conflated the issues of homelessness, substance use disorder, and public space into a

tangle of ideas, affects, and anecdotes. These narratives have lingered, migrated, and exploded.

The discursive power “Mass and Cass<sup>1</sup>” has in the city of Boston served as a recent example of how power and politics are embedded in the naming and maintenance of a place. In public discourse, Mass and Cass is not a simple identifier of a geographic location – it is not centered on the concern of the intersection of Melnea Cass Blvd and Mass Ave. (Critical geographers have after all convincingly argued place is political). The phrase Mass and Cass (sometimes written in articles and urban planning documents as Mass/Cass) has a history which participates in contemporary events that continue to shape the people and places moving through this zone.

The intersections of Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard, in an area loosely centered around one of Boston’s oldest public city hospital (Boston Medical Center), are coarsely referred to as “Methadone Mile” or “Recovery Road” on account of the perceived concentration of programs and providers offering services to those seeking treatment for substance use disorder or those experiencing chronic or conditional homelessness.

In less than a half mile radius circling the intersections of these two major vehicular thoroughfares, three politically demarcated neighborhoods collide without any clear indication of their borders or boundaries. To the west of Mass. Ave: Roxbury. To the east: the South End. To the immediate south: a collage of industrial infrastructures

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<sup>1</sup> As of 2021, Mass and Cass was the common terminology used in city plans. The area has been marked by another geographic idiom, “Methadone Mile.” Its inception was not used in a pejorative manner, although it has taken on that characteristic. (Methadone is a medication used in the treatment of Substance Use Disorder (SUD). Activists, advocates for treatment of SUD and harm reduction practices are currently debating politicians and “would be neighbors” to open methadone clinics in cities across the U. S.)



known as Newmarket. Demographically, socially, and economically, the contrasts amongst these neighborhoods are distinct. However, the jurisdictional outlines of each neighborhood are fuzzy. The edges of each abut or belong simultaneously to state, city, or neighborhood political designations.

Additionally, there is a recognizable shift in urban scale and fabric; Victorian era brownstones transition into institutional medical facilities into low-density food distribution warehouses, car washes, and storage facilities. The legibility of places and their peripheries is cloudy. This ambiguity confuses claims to ownership, stewardship, and care amongst the multiple populations that live, work, play, and exist within these territories.

A territorial marker does not require that a person be present to become stuck to a place or an object. If the definition of a place depends on its groundedness to a specific location, then how does it move and mark those that are not present? How does a place become “charged” with potential crisis intervention? How are decisions made and justified without considering the existing elements that have been shaped by previous decisions, such as the environment, buildings, infrastructure, and ecosystems of “stakeholders in a given place”?

Ultimately the questions are posed to decision makers. Narratives about places provide essential clues about how particular public discourses shape the character of “problems” and, consequently, set the frameworks for policy and planning decisions. Place-based politics erase the specificity of bodies and the nuances of context. Place-based markers affixed to boundaries, acts, or populations are not neutral.

## **STICKY OBJECTS NEAR MASS AND CASS**

The visual and linguistic presence of certain objects act as a form of “stickiness” that can unequally mark and transfer associations to bodies in public space. Sara Ahmed refers to this as the “transferral of public affects.” Tracing the circulation and accumulation of sticky objects reveals how power differentials shape which affects and associations materialize publicly through everyday infrastructures. Moreover, they illuminate which presences, including certain lives, are permitted to “stick.”

Amidst the attempt to unravel the reasons behind the operations and identify the decision-makers involved, attention was drawn to the implicit values embedded within the language used by civic associations to frame their perception of the issues at hand. Certain objects repeatedly emerged in these accounts, for example, trash, syringes/needles, tents, feces, stoop (it's not unusual to hear neighborhood residents reference feces on a stoop; it's never clear if they are talking about the same instance or not). In Boston's South End a stoop marks a significant difference in trespassing the line between private and public. Referencing the stoop implies a deeper transgression, it's an invasion of privacy even though it's outside the door. During this time, the city's “311” service received complaints indicating the abundant presence of trash, syringes/needles, or cardboard. These citizen requests for remediation often failed to mention a body at all. Yet within the narrative construction, there existed an implied connection between a subject and the objects being documented.

In another case, the destruction of a wheelchair by a Public Works garbage truck became, through Twitter posts of pictures of the incident, an object of advocacy. The wheelchair itself underwent a transformation in retelling the account by Boston Police Commissioner William Gross. According to Gross, the wheelchairs need to be removed

because, “They were used like a pin cushion by discarded needles. They were a hazard [and] we got them out of the way.”<sup>2</sup> The wheelchair split and transformed from a supportive object into a veritable “pin cushion” of needles, repositioning its presence as the laminated emblem of the safety and health risks associated with Mass and Cass.

In August of 2023, catalyzing a permanent moratorium on tent encampments, Boston City Councilor Erin Murphy filed a hearing order to investigate whether street cleaning equipment used at Mass and Cass is spreading infectious diseases to other parts of Boston and polluting Boston Harbor. Murphy argued that using the same cleaning equipment in different neighborhoods, including the South End, Back Bay, Beacon Hill, and Bay Village, may lead to contamination and the potential spread of diseases. What is deemed a looming threat is shaped by power dynamics that normalize some populations as sources of contagion. In this case, very literally, through the vehicles of street sweepers.<sup>3</sup>




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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wbur.org/news/2019/08/09/melnea-cass-mass-ave-sweeps>

<sup>3</sup> A post to Universal Hub reported, “Councilor Gabriela Coletta, whose district includes the North End, blasted the attempt to spread “unwarranted fear” over an issue that no Boston public-health official has yet raised, especially just a couple years out from the worst days of the pandemic, which showed what happens “when public health matters become political.” <https://www.universalhub.com/2023/councilor-suggests-mass-and-cass-street-sweepers>

## PERSISTENT AFFECTS, IMPOSSIBLE NEIGHBORS

The events that occurred during the first week of August 2019 in the area surrounding the Boston Medical Center increased awareness of issues that became identified simply by location – Mass and Cass. The lack of specificity in the naming of issues, and instead naming the location, the complexity of factors at play becomes obscured - the vagueness of the discourse ignores the complex relationships surrounding a given area that include forces going far beyond a given intersection.

Displacement operations like Operation Clean Sweep can have significant impacts on the surrounding environment and individuals in proximity, particularly those with experiences of trauma and precarity. People who have undergone complex trauma or survive PTSD may experience alterations in sensory processing—either hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity to stimuli<sup>4</sup>. For individuals in the Mass and Cass area experiencing housing instability, public space takes on increased significance for survival. The instruments deployed during sweeps inherently carry sensory impacts. The presence of waste trucks radiates palpable size and weight<sup>5</sup>, amplified by lined-up vehicles awaiting use. Their hard exteriors can be sensed from a distance through haptic perception,

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<sup>4</sup> Harricharan, S., McKinnon, M. C., & Lanius, R. A. (2021). How Processing of Sensory Information From the Internal and External Worlds Shape the Perception and Engagement With the World in the Aftermath of Trauma: Implications for PTSD. *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, 15, 625490. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnins.2021.625490>

<sup>5</sup> Weight of Stuff. The length of a standard garbage truck typically ranges from 25 to 40 feet (7.6 to 12.2 meters). This includes the length of the truck cab and the waste collection body. The width of a garbage truck can range from 8 to 10 feet (2.4 to 3 meters), excluding any side mirrors or other protruding features. The height of a garbage truck usually falls between 10 and 12 feet (3 to 3.7 meters), depending on the design and equipment installed. The weight of a garbage truck can vary greatly based on its size, capacity, and the type of waste it is designed to handle. On average, a standard garbage truck can weigh anywhere from 20,000 to 40,000 pounds (9,000 to 18,000 kilograms) when empty. When fully loaded with waste, it can weigh up to 60,000 to 80,000 pounds (27,000 to 36,000 kilograms) or more. These dimensions and weights are approximate and can differ based on various factors, including the specific manufacturer, model, and local regulations.

registering as intimidating moving objects. Engine vibrations generate low-frequency sonic growls perceptible within the bones, resonating through the inner ear all the way to the axial skeleton. Toxic exhaust fumes also enter the bodies of those faced with an impossible choice—to either leave and risk negative consequences, or to remain facing different potential harms.

In discussions with service providers, social workers, doctors, nurses, outreach workers, representatives from faith-based organizations, and community liaison officers from the BPD, activists present asked questions about the planning, timing, and communication prior to the sweep. The members present who were most likely to have information, a representative from the mayor's office and an officer from the BPD, were unaware the sweep was going to take place or whether they would continue. Left without much information that could be passed along to those most affected, the conversation turned to sharing information about the whereabouts of people who were engaged with programs housed at Boston Medical Center and nearby shelters and day programs. In a matter of hours, relationships that required the building of trust over time were strained, if not broken. The planners of the sweeps imagined, I speculate, that the scattering of people would serve the purposes of moving bodies and objects from a single location, but the short-sighted tactics resulted in the fragmentation of an array of relationships.

There is a disconnect between the statements of support for “our neighbors who are struggling” and the policies and maneuvers that adversely affect the same people. Clearly abutting or neighboring does not equate with neighborliness. Territorial borders arise when proximity meets sovereignty. And abiding by the social norms of being neighborly or being a good neighbor is still far removed from a theological sense of being

someone's neighbor. But the tensions that arise when bodies live in proximity provide a ground for reflecting on one's understanding of neighbor – philosophically, theologically and politically pushing on one another. Investigating what constitutes one's neighbor, and by extension what constitutes love of the neighbor, becomes increasingly complicated when we place conceptualizations of an abstract neighbor alongside embodied flesh dwelling near us.

By dilating the temporal and spatial boundaries, we see how the sweep both emerged from and exacerbated the layered affectual residues of past policies and spatial injustices. Ultimately, focusing narrowly on homelessness as a purported issue elides the discourses of criminalization, property, and normative claims to proximity that shape daily navigation of public spaces. An examination more attuned to spatial dimensions encourages ongoing critique of how state interventions often performatively manage some lives at the expense of deepening structural inequities for others.

## **BIOPOLITICS**

In the months that followed, the concentration of articles in the local newspapers that covered policies addressing homelessness increased. The reporting on the events that were most directly associated with OCS faded in intensity by the end of 2019, but Mass and Cass continued to be a matter of concern.

In the late Fall of 2019, the Mayor's office released a planning document, "Mass Cass 2.0," as a measure intended to address an increasingly audible public discourse around "Operation Clean Sweep" and the murky territories of competing interests in the Mass and Cass area (Walsh, 2019). The plan reflects residents' frustrations about the responsibilities of municipal actors.

The plan attempts to balance multiple civic agendas, yet effectively positions public health strategies as at odds with public safety and quality of life concerns. It suggests a familiar pattern of “event-response” that perpetuates a way of operating through request-fulfillment or unilateral problem solving without the time for reflection necessary to clearly articulate the complexities of the problems. Broadening access to the records of decision-making reveals the curiosities, frictions, and desires that frequently emerge in a project’s development, but often remain veiled behind “official” documents.

Broader systems of racial oppression have long operated through and been enforced in public spaces, including recent examples of fatal encounters with police.. In 2020, in one of Boston’s public spaces, a community of medical professionals and frontline healthcare workers knelt in protest and solidarity with communities of color (Griffin and Adams, 2020). Recognizing that these protests are happening in Mass Cass, we might revisit the “coordinated policing” of *Operation Clean Sweep*; not as the consequence of a public’s safety at odds with a public’s health, but as a striking example of how conceptualizations of safety, health and territory can get inflamed at the intersections of space and identity.

Rather than an isolated incident, OCS must be revisited as emerging from layered historical and spatial injustices. Official documents rarely convey the messiness of development processes or acknowledge structural power differentials. A biopolitical analysis illuminates how discourses of risk and intervention have disproportionate bodily impacts, managing some lives while criminalizing others according to normalized spatial operations. OCS serves as an important reminder of the imperative of centering

spatialized experiences of marginalization within critiques of state management of urban "crises."

## **AGENTS AND EVENTS IN EXPANDED FIELDS**

When considered in expanded fields, events are understood not from single intentional subjects but from diffuse agencies interacting across assemblages in nonlinear ways. This perspective complicates straightforward attempts to locate blame or responsibility. Causation is distributed across a wide array of agencies, from state institutions and policies to economic conditions, public discourses, architecture, social service networks, and more. Accountability emerges from a recognition of power differentials; particular actors (police and "residents," for example) relative to those living unhoused, wield more power in shaping the field of events related to OCS.

Power differentials operate within nested ecologies, including the built environment. Multi-scalar spatial injustices emerge from overlapping ecologies of agency. Operation Clean Sweep emphasizes the importance of viewing events like OCS as emerging from complex, multi-scalar interactions between various stakeholders over time, rather than through simplistic narratives of isolated causation. Such a perspective calls for distributed forms of accountability that recognize both the differential positioning of human and nonhuman actors, as well as the role of structural power dynamics in shaping socio-spatial processes and the architectures involved in their maintenance. Critiquing OCS through concepts like spatial justice encourages ongoing examination of how normalized responses to urban crises often obscure and further entrench marginalization within contested spaces. By broadening analytical frames in this



way, we can work to reposition place-based narratives and policies in a manner that more fully acknowledges their complex, unequal impacts on vulnerable communities.

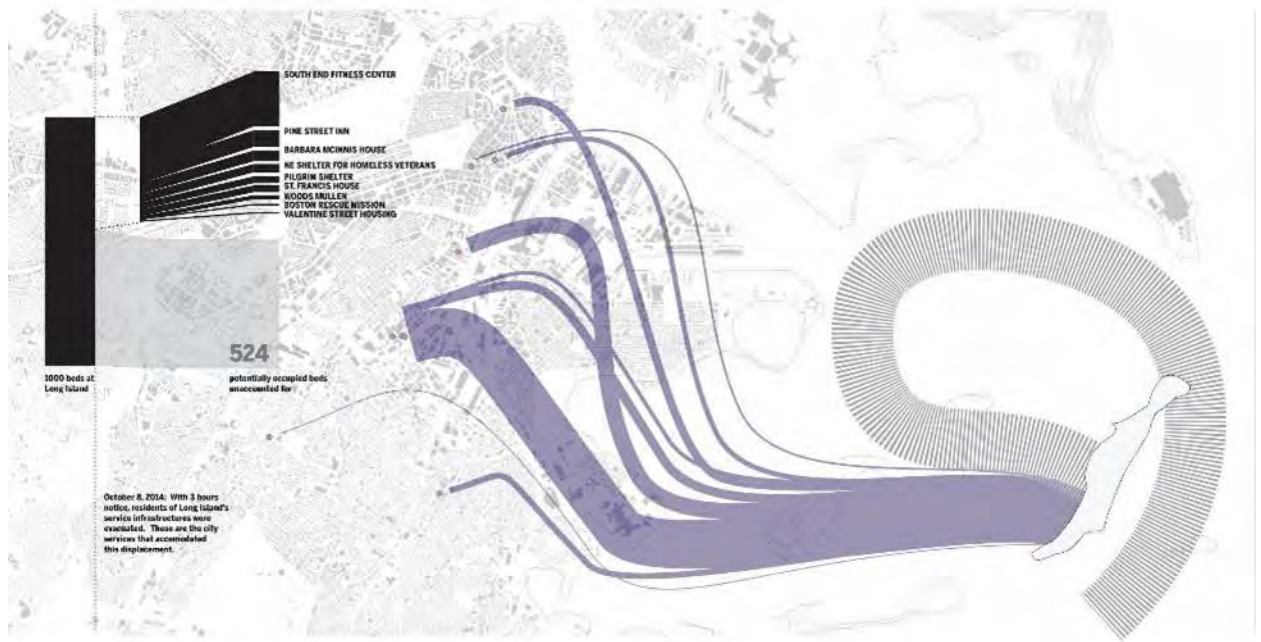


Figure 56 Fallow Design Research, co-founders Kyle Warren & Ben Peterson

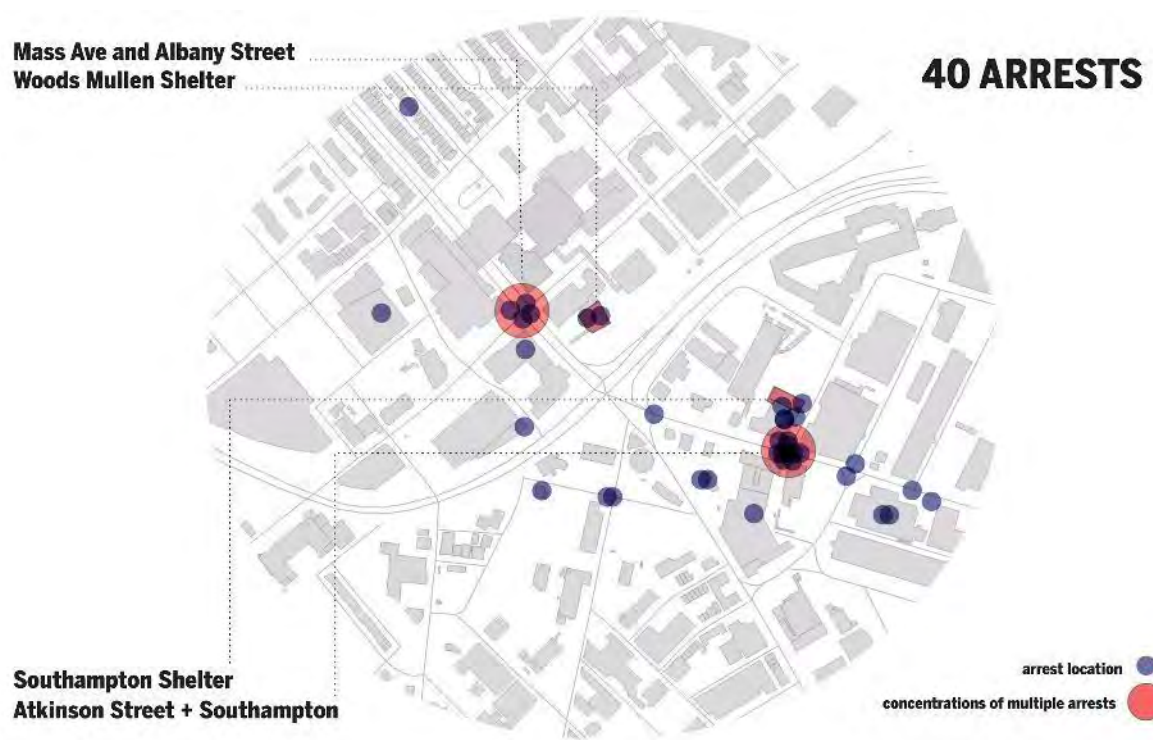


Figure 57 Fallow, co-founders Kyle Warren & Ben Peterson

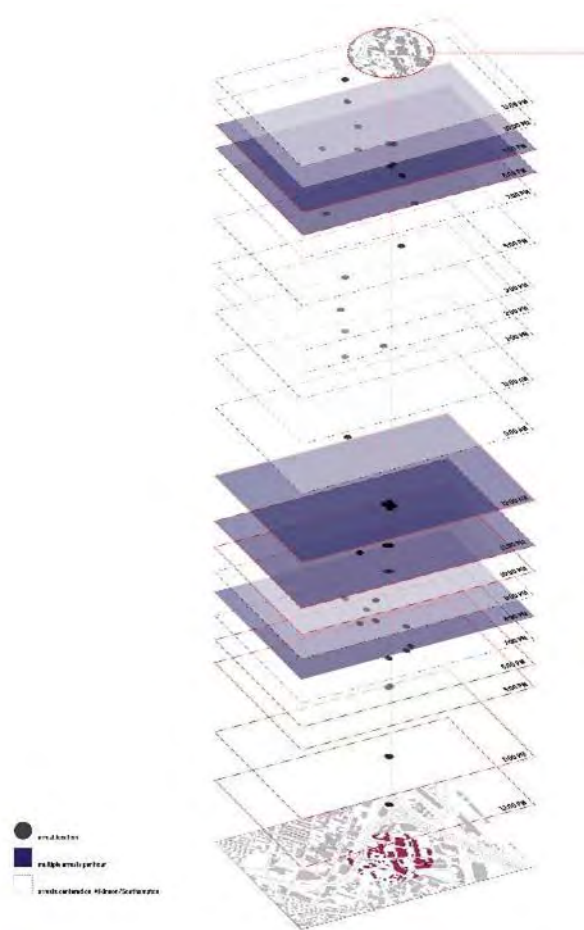


Figure 58 Fallow, co-founders Kyle Warren & Ben Peterson

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MATERIAL ECOLOGIES OF AGENCY

#### INTRODUCTION

When a structural problem becomes diagnosed in terms of the will, then individuals become the problem:  
 individuals become the cause of problems they deem their own.<sup>1</sup>  
 —Lauren Berlant

A more complete political account of conflict would demand an understanding of what we would like to call  
 “field causality” — aggregate causes that apply, like a force field, from all directions, involving various agencies  
 and modes of physical transformation to shape a specific reality.”<sup>2</sup>  
 —Eyal Weizman/Forensic Architecture




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<sup>1</sup> Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 7. Quoted from: Lauren Berlant, “Compassion (and Withholding)” in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, edited by Lauren Berlant (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1-14.

<sup>2</sup> Flash Art, *Conditions of Life: Forensic Architecture in the Age of Climate Breakdown* by Elise Hunchuck, #326 JUNE–AUG 2019 quoting *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, Sternberg Press, 2014, 550.

<https://flash---art.com/article/conditions-of-life-forensic-architecture-in-the-age-of-climate-breakdown/>



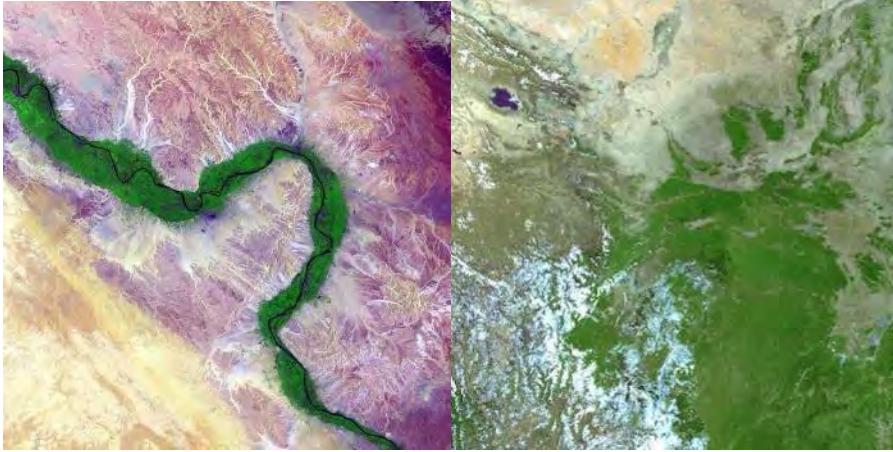


Figure 59 Top right and bottom images: “Rambla Climate-House” and “Intimate Stranger” by Andre Jaque, The Office for Political Innovation. The remaining images are open source on UnSpark. The collection of images is meant to evoke Eames’ “Powers of Ten” (1977) and Jaque’s *Superpower of Scale* (2020).

### Individual-Cause

The events surrounding a series of police raids targeting Boston's homeless population (see Interlude 4), dubbed "Operation Clean Sweep," warrant a critical examination of how we determine causality and assign accountability in complex socio-material contexts. Reporter Chris Citorik’s article reflects the persistent recounting of the events surrounding police sweeps targeting an area of Boston where unhoused people gather. Citorik’s opening line, “First there was an attack,” established the genesis of the

mobilization of police officers and sanitation truck operators in a militarized strategy that existed originally as a week-long strategy and continued as periodic sweeps (at the time of my writing this dissertation chapter in 2023, sweeps have been maintained as governing tools). Newspapers and police statements repeatedly linked cause and effect, solidifying a singular event as the origin narrative. However, I argue that this narrative, which was influenced by prevailing assumptions about personal accountability and agency, reflects an impulse to attribute causation to a single event or individual. These assumptions affect how we frame responsibility and ultimately what socio-political actions we support or tolerate.

Juridical processes in the United States rely heavily on the assertion that individual actors are the causal agents of events. The inability to assign a causal human agent creates a gap in juridical thinking. For example, when a person is experiencing homelessness, there is enormous focus on the individual in order to locate the cause and the potential for subsequent actions or causes to reverse their lack of permanent housing. When a person becomes homeless due to a “natural disaster,” a human agent cannot be identified and the phrase “made homeless by an act of God” appears in newspaper articles from the early 20th century. The phrase “an act of God” persists in insurance language; it is a contractual *force majeure* phrase (Fr. “greater force”) in which no party can be held accountable. The lack of determination of a human actant or causal agent becomes a special case scenario. Consequently, entire programs and funds are allocated differently, based on whether an individual is the source or perceived cause of homelessness, through irresponsibility, idleness, or vice, or if the causal event is not located in the individual. Liability must be assigned in order to know how justice is

performed. As discussed in this dissertation, the figure of "the homeless" carries implied characterizations that presume a lack of full human agency or capacity. Yet historically, figures like "the vagrant" have been stigmatized as consistent sources of crime, illness, and disorder in communities.. Therefore, there is a need to disrupt framing causality in terms of individuals alone, particularly when the location of cause or blame is unevenly distributed along racial, gendered, and ableist lines. Rather than defending against anti-homeless rhetoric, I am interested in how alternative models of causality could undermine an overly individualistic view and also expand discourse beyond just "the homeless issue." This reframing would serve as a reminder that homelessness arises not from isolated factors but from the broader systems shaping human relationships to habitation and place.

As the previous interlude demonstrates, spatial operations that ensnare and trap bodies with the aid of non-security designed objects, such as garbage trucks, call for examining a wider relational context beyond a single incident between identified individuals. The built environment contributes to environmental violence through scarring of the land, extraction of resources, and immense carbon production. We might consider an expanded notion of "environment" as encompassing relational aspects between both material and immaterial actors/forces, conceptualizing the environment as a web of interactions between tangible and intangible elements that collectively shape conditions and experiences.

In an interview, architect Eyal Weizman explains the challenges he faced when developing his investigative architecture practices. He says,

Evidence for environmental violence is more scattered and diffused. Instead, it requires the examination of what we call 'field causalities'—*causal ecologies* that

are non-linear, diffused, simultaneous, and that involve multiple agencies and feedback loops, challenging the immediacy of ‘evidence’. . . Whereas linear causality entails a focus on sequences of causal events on the model of criminal law that seeks to trace a direct line between the two limit figures of victim and perpetrator field causality involves the spatial arrangement of simultaneous sites, actions and causes. It is inherently relational and thus a spatial concept.<sup>3</sup> [added emphasis]

Weizman's depiction of causal ecologies echoes political theorist William Connolly's definitions of causality, highlighting the political relevance of attributing cause. But there remains a theological, philosophical kernel in the element of the causal link between event and individual. Before exploring the potential for a transdisciplinary engagement between theopoetics and architecture in the pursuit of spatial justice, I discuss the theological and philosophical conditions of what I refer to as the “cause-agency-will complex.” How we understand agency, responsibility, and will influences (and is influenced by) how we interpret the cause of events. The identification of people as agents varies, and who is seen as the cause is complex. Under the influence of stigma, individuals, communities, and constructed representations can paradoxically be viewed both as lacking agency to make good decisions and as having corrupt agencies that contribute to poor decisions, while also being attributed as the cause or agent driving social problems.<sup>4</sup>

### Causal Ecologies

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<sup>3</sup> Eyal Weizman in a 2015 *Theory Talk* interview: Schouten, P. (2015) ‘Theory Talk #69: ‘Eyal Weizman on the Architectural-Image Complex, Forensic Archeology and Policing across the Desertification Line’, Theory Talks, <http://www.theorytalks.org/2015/03/theory-talk-69.html> (11-3-2015)

<sup>4</sup> Some theorists identify one such mechanism as scapegoating; for example, Rene Girard, theorizes scapegoating is *the* mechanism.



Social problems that are conceived of as the result of human action (or inaction) are constrained by myopic frameworks, distorted by perceptions of self and others, and forged by the unrelenting hosts of oppressive –isms and –phobias. A more comprehensive understanding requires recognizing how social issues emerge from complex interactions between individuals, institutions, and structural conditions that both enable and constrain human agency. This chapter's questioning of subject-actor and object-architecture challenges the way people are caught in force fields that are not of their own making, yet are moved, molded, and managed as if they are the primary cause for a given set of circumstances which are themselves a part of assemblages that exist at scales and speeds, frequencies and topologies that human species are unable to control or entirely account for.<sup>5</sup>

Rather than locating blame in individual moral failures, an "ecological sensibility" allows for more distributed understandings of agency across human and nonhuman elements.<sup>6</sup> Ecological and relational thinkers co-mingle to problematize overly simplistic interpretations of the origin, cause, and effect of events. New materialist political philosophers Jane Bennett and William Connolly, eco-feminist and process theologian-

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5 In this chapter, conceptualizations of architecture that are dominated by ideas of form, figuration, visualization, and distance do not have a firm foundation on which to establish themselves. A Deleuzian conceptualization of the architectural, deterritorialized object will resonate more readily than a modernist definition of architecture as an object-form positioned in, but distinct from, a surrounding site (see Chapter 1). While architecture as a discrete object does not preclude relationships, the relational ontologies exemplified in the work of Deleuze, an influential figure for each of the contemporary thinkers I use, complicate relationships between discrete subject-object relations and question both the nature and limits of the subject and object themselves, resulting in different understandings of relationality.

Hélène Frichot and Stephen Loo, editors, *Deleuze and Architecture* (Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

philosopher Catherine Keller, and architect and theorist Andrés Jaque figure prominently. By emphasizing theoretical perspectives that are relational alongside spatial-architectural perspectives, the dynamism of actors-events come to the forefront. The reconceptualization of individual-as-cause, helps to dissolve rigid ontologies and theories that apply political problem solving toward "social problems." The ecological thinkers I engage conceptualize vibrant entanglements that surpass the boundaries of human cognition and mastery or isolated subjective intentionality. This chapter challenges prevailing assumptions about agency, intention, and subjectivity that obscure our embeddedness within dynamic ecological relationships.

When events are viewed with an *ecological sensibility*, their genesis does not lie solely within separate atomistic agents. Even in events that appear most immediate, such as a crisis or an emergency, causality cannot be understood fully by operating on the assumption that human individuals are the sole movers, the subjects in which all action is generated and free will detaches the self from the constraints of others. Ecological thinking can be used to broaden the scope of causality and to reflect on the assessment and assignment of responsibility and accountability— which I refer to as "ecologies of causality."<sup>7</sup> *Causal ecologies* reflect the struggle to parse the “beginning” and “end” of an event “in real time.” If we are not critically questioning collective narratives of social problems, we are susceptible to governing processes that: 1. identify a singular cause for an event, 2. accumulate data, 3. interpret/convert it into information using disciplinary specific tools, 4. construct narratives for communication for particular audiences 5. direct

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<sup>7</sup> I am informed by William Connolly's distinction between emergent causality and efficient/mechanistic causality he refers to in *A World of Becoming* and *The Fragility of Things*.

resources toward a response to the framed event – producing coordinated and discordant flows.

This chapter examines how events are recounted in public discourse and politicized by various stakeholders.<sup>8</sup> It argues that this process often involves a reduction of participatory agents and force fields, which can lead to a failure to perceive more extensive, unfolding processes. How do accompanying notions of *causality* and *self-responsibility* ripple beyond a single moment? How do objects and occasions that seem peripheral to these events participate in the cumulative public perception of assigning the cause of expanding effects to an individual or a group of individuals — understood as a self-contained agent with free will? Additionally, this chapter aims to highlight the need for deeper analysis of how moral frameworks and judgments become intricately entwined with tangible deployment and coordination of resources and forces within the built environment.

First, I will look at the theological and philosophical formations of the will and its significance for understanding agency before turning to definitions of agency that Jane Bennett provides in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, I will explore how conceptualizations of agency arise from theologies of “the will.” Sara Ahmed provides an entry point to will and provides a connection to the previous chapter’s acknowledgement of the overlaps between some affect theorists and new materialists. Ahmed’s *Willful Subjects* can be seen as a bridge to her subsequent work, *What is the Use?*, in which she describes her intellectual journey as a movement from words to things.

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<sup>8</sup> See Judith P Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (Fordham Univ Press, 2009).

This chapter abbreviates that journey to present a notion of ecologies of causality between theological and philosophical ideas and “things” in the built environment—some, but not all, of which are buildings. Finally, an examination of architect Andrés Jaque's notion of “transscalar” architecture provides a framework for analyzing material participation across diverse spatial and temporal scales and presents generative grounding for thinking through the potential for a theopoetics of (decolonized) architecture. Architectural practices that center relational, multi-scalar, and materially heterogeneous processes in their philosophies and methodologies help to contextualize the emergent (or latent) potentials or architectural-ecological thinking.<sup>9</sup>

I suggest, by framing spatial justice from an architectural point of view, one might be able to look at ecologies of materials to further understand the processes of histories of settler colonialists’ actions of privatized political entities in order to dismantle and assemble in more just ways. A theopoetics of architecture remains open to the typically unaccounted for force fields and intercarnational powers that participate in the cycles of creation and destruction at macro and micro levels. Architectural-ecological thinking might offer tools for intervening in the built environment—a space that studies of sacred architecture have yet to account for in a significant way. Therefore, this chapter provides theoretical touchstones for future experiments in reading theopoetics and architecture as

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9 Architect and founding member of the organization Decolonizing Architecture Art Research, Eyal Weizman has acknowledged he has relied on Francis Yates’ *The Art of Memory* to better understand how architecture participates in memory and trauma. The architectural and design offices I reference in this chapter are interdisciplinary and they often reference literature and philosophy as sources for how they have reconceptualized their approaches to architecture. For example, architect and theorists Andrés Jaque and Eyal Weizman credit Isabelle Stengers as an influence on their thinking. <http://www.theory-talks.org/2015/03/theory-talk-69.html>. Weizman also references Isabelle Stengers in his essays. In his 2019 article “Becoming Digital,” he footnoted: See Isabelle Stengers, “The Cosmopolitical Proposal,” in Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Making Things Public* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 994–1003.

meeting on ecological terms to construct new modes of seeing-feeling-dwelling creatively— co-crafting, co-making, and co-assembling.

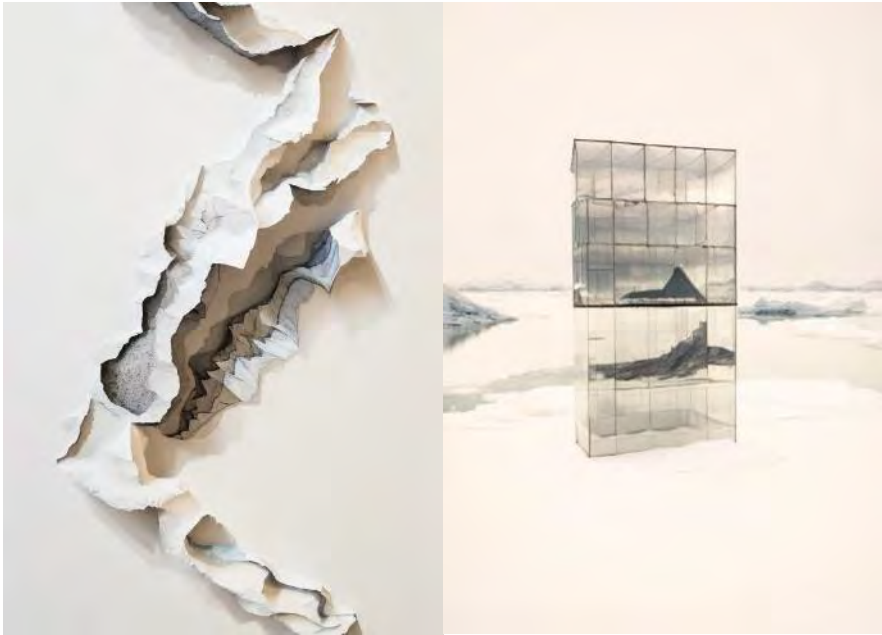


Figure 60 R. Kyle Warren

## AGENCY & THE WILL

The will is so closely tied to the subject, that *theologies of will* inform how we understand an acting subject itself.<sup>10</sup> (my emphasis)  
—Sara Ahmed

In the previous chapter, I explored how Ahmed theorizes public emotions as affects that move between bodies in contrast to theories of emotions that describe them as being internal and belonging to a singular body. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* she discusses the politics associated with emotional “ownership.” She questions how we attribute emotions and imagine their genesis. Our conclusions depend on where emotions have their place of origin. Our interpretations are influenced by where—in whom—

<sup>10</sup> For more discussion of Augustine’s theology of the will, see *Seducing Augustine*. Hanna Arendt also describes Augustine as “the first philosopher of the will.” Virginia Burrus et al., *Seducing Augustine : Bodies, Desires, Confessions* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

emotions are believed to originate. Then, in her subsequent book, *Willful Subjects*, Ahmed delves into the notion of the will and its role in shaping subject formations in relation to the dominant social will.<sup>11</sup>

Quoting Nietzsche, Ahmed writes, “the ‘free will’ is ‘the most infamous of all the arts of the theologian for making mankind ‘accountable’ in his sense of the word.’”<sup>12</sup> She adds, “An account of will is an account of becoming accountable, of becoming guilty. . . . Not only does the will allow actions to be referred back to a subject, but it is through the will that the subject is unified as an entity.”<sup>13</sup> The will, for Ahmed, gets converted into a power, the capacity for action, influence. She does not use the word “affect” here; rather the quality of “to act upon” is introduced in terms of “power of the will.” In her words:

The will is transformed in contemporary culture into ‘willpower’, into something that a responsible and moral subject must develop or strengthen. When the will becomes willpower, then the fate of the subject becomes ‘in its power.’ And when social problems are narrated as problems of will, they become a consequence of the failure of individuals to will themselves out of situations in which they find themselves.<sup>14</sup>

Ahmed’s interdisciplinary approach rarely includes theologians as conversation partners. Therefore, Ahmed relies heavily on Arendt’s reading of Augustine to create a theological opening. The will, Arendt explains interpreting Augustine, is not the capacity to act

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<sup>11</sup> Ahmed recognizes this genealogy but for this specific project, she decides to focus on willfulness more than will through the figure of “the willful child.”

<sup>12</sup> “[Foucault] notes in an interview, “What is Critique?”, how the thematic of power should have led him to the question of the will.” WS, 6-7

<sup>13</sup> Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 7.

according to one's will. "*Non hoc est velle quode posse.*"<sup>15</sup> (Augustine does not employ the term "willpower." While Ahmed opts to concentrate on the concept of "willpower," I choose to discuss the term "will" to broaden Ahmed's emphasis on the contemporary discourse surrounding willpower from a theological perspective.) Will is not conceptualized as a faculty of power (*posse* or *potestas*).<sup>16</sup> Willpower implies will is "in the subject's power." While willfulness is "used to explain errors of will—unreasonable or perverted will—as faults of character."<sup>17</sup> Ahmed begins with the definition of willfulness which includes "asserting or disposed to assert one's will against persuasion, instruction, or command; governed by will without regard to reason."<sup>18</sup>

By looking closer at willfulness, Ahmed argues, we might begin to identify forms of the collective or general will,<sup>19</sup> the state or capitalist will that acts as a "straightening device" but phenomenologically recedes to the background.<sup>20</sup> Ahmed utilizes the figure of "the willful child" as an example to illustrate a person whose willfulness runs counter to the goals of others or who exhibits willfulness against the dominant will or

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<sup>15</sup> Hannah Arendt, Judith Chelius Stark, and Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott, *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago; London: The University Chicago Press, [Post, 2005], 87.

<sup>16</sup> Arendt, Part II, 88

<sup>17</sup> Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Ahmed further explains, similar to her theorization of "collective feelings," We do not need to think of will as what a collective (or an individual) *has*. 56

<sup>20</sup> Phenomenologically, Ahmed claims, "what has been 'already willed' or 'generally willed' tends to recede or become background." Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 16

atmospheric will.<sup>21</sup> The atmospheric will is not a readily recognizable thing. The atmospheric will of a place is not something that can be stated, and if it could be, how likely are places to display the dominant atmospheric wills of the zone or enclosure? Architectural processes offer potential avenues to begin identifying the atmospheric will, based on the material arrangements of a place. The will that orchestrates the movement in a space is not readily recognizable. The contours of a willed order manifest when the privileged arrangements/atmospheres of a will (an authority figure, an institution, the state) is challenged. Willfulness—going against the established order—maps the lines/walls of power and privilege previously discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

The exertion of will can come in unexpected forms; for example, “mere persistence can be an act of disobedience.”<sup>22</sup> Willfulness and willpower can be thought of as asserting one’s will against a force.<sup>23</sup> And asserting one’s will against a force can be considered an act of agency. Significant to this chapter’s concerns about ecologies of causality and agency, Ahmed does not attribute willfulness solely to subjects; willfulness can also be attributed to objects that obstruct or hinder intentions.<sup>24</sup> Whereas Ahmed initially focuses on willfulness as a characteristic attributed to human subjects who obstinately assert their own path, she extends this notion by arguing that willfulness can

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<sup>21</sup> Similarly to her use of the feminist killjoy in *The Promise of Happiness*, Ahmed discusses the figure of the feminist killjoy, in *Willful Subjects* she utilizes the example of the willful child to critically examine assumptions and constructions surrounding “voluntariness and compulsion.”

<sup>22</sup> Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 9-10

<sup>23</sup> Ahmed claims, “Will and force can thus amount to the same thing: if not willing, then forced. When willing is a way of avoiding the consequence of force, willing is a consequence of force.” (Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 42).

<sup>24</sup> Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 19-20



also be assigned to objects that are seen to hinder or obstruct intentions, distributing disturbance across bodies and things.

Willing happy, harmonious objects—which include “desirable” objects such as atmospheres, zones, and communities—can thus be about removing the wrong objects from the “will sphere.”<sup>25</sup> Proximities themselves can be objects that frustrate the dominant will. The object-subject distinctions begin to blur and the blockage, frustration, or willfulness materializes into public affects that trigger biopolitical responses fueled by recommitment to intent to exercise a dominant will. Inevitably, both subjects and objects that are out-of-place, out-of-line, or not at home will be perceived as willful impositions. This perception, driven by our own will and intentions, often results in the removal of subjects and objects deemed impositions. These are typically those that willingly, or heretically in a theological context, oppose—or simply do not conform to—the harmony the will desires.

Some-one or some-thing may be interpreted as willingly going against their own well-being if the general will determines they are better off being in a location different than the one they currently inhabit. The accountability, cause, or blame for negative results can then be applied to the subject or object that is blocking the “public” will toward public safety, public health, or public hygiene even if the willful body experiences negative encounters. In other words, “a weakness of will” is often used to explain how individuals willingly compromise their own well-being. Accurate assessment of a

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<sup>25</sup> 79. Also, Ahmed writes, “What Husserl calls ‘the near sphere’ or ‘the core sphere,’ ‘a sphere of things that I can reach with my kinestheses and which I can experience in an optimal form through seeing, touching ect.’ ...could thus also be described as ‘a will sphere.’” (Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 41).

person's weakness of will relies on "prior judgment of what is good for us, of what is necessary for a body to flourish in a biological as well as a moral sense."<sup>26</sup> Willfulness, on the other hand, is seen as compromising bodily health and can also serve as a basis for judgments of a body's overall health.

Following this logic, one would expect negative consequences to be directed at individuals or groups in order to correct or realign behavior—otherwise, the ordering and disciplinary actions taken would lack a target. Directionless actions undermine the idea of agency that is aligned with theological notions of will, which demand non-passive and action-oriented individual formation in obedience to the divine will. Will is related to yet distinct from agency. While efforts to conceive of more-than-human entities as agents provide insightful alternatives, they do not fully account for the theological concept of will, which informs the concept of agency. In other words, action and agency itself are not liberating if the action and agency are controlled by a dominant will. Will is not a political agenda or a mission statement, it is not an articulable program or project, Augustinian conceptions of the will are unknowable in their fullness. God's will, or any metaphysical will, eludes capture by political language, rendering it more challenging to address in the political realm.

Complex systems and material entanglements complicate anthropocentric individualistic notions of will and agency, the cornerstones for assigning cause or giving an account of oneself. "In fact," says Butler, "the doer becomes the causal agent of the deed only through retroactive attribution that seeks to comply with a moral ontology stipulated by a legal system, on that establishes accountability and punishable offenses by

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<sup>26</sup> Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 84.

locating a relevant self as a causal source of suffering. . . [and yet]. . . suffering exceeds an effect caused by oneself or another...”<sup>27</sup> The demand to give an account of oneself entails understanding the formation of the subject and its relationship to responsibility, navigating between owning up to one's causative contribution, qualifying it, or defending against its attribution by locating the cause elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> Any account of an “I” that attempts to remain independent from its surrounding environment seeks to keep “outside” forces at bay in an effort to protect or impose one's will. However, this isolated account of the “I” fails to recognize that their agency does not exist as an individual trait. Rather, agency acts through networks of support and ecologies of becoming; agency is relational. Complicating “straightforward” attempts to self-disclose our actions or interpret how agency operates within an occurrence, this perspective recognizes that agency is nested within interconnect systems.

### **RETHINKING AGENCY (AGENCY OF ASSEMBLAGES) DISTRIBUTIVE AGENCY<sup>29</sup>**

The previous examinations of the will, willfulness, and willful subjects provide context for rethinking individualistic and anthropocentric notions of agency. Much like the concept of an autonomous will, agency has frequently been construed as the sole province of human intentionality and individual subjects. However, new materialist perspectives propose more distributed understandings of agency across human and nonhuman actants to account for nonlinear, nonhierarchical, non-subject-centered modes

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<sup>27</sup> 14

<sup>28</sup> GAO, 11, 135

<sup>29</sup> 21

of agency.<sup>30</sup> Rather than strong, efficient causality stemming from an independent subject, Jane Bennett advances a theory of emergent, distributive agency within assemblages. This contrasts with the emphasis on individual willpower and moral responsibility. Bennett recognizes the swarm of vitalities involved in events, moving away from attributing agency to a single root cause. Her ecological sensibility aligns with the distributed disturbances across bodies and objects described by Ahmed. In these views, intention does not precede action in a direct fashion. By decentering the human subject, more complex contours of events emerge through entangled agencies that include architecture, landscape, and atmosphere.

I agree with Bennett's affirmation of sociologist Noortje Marres' insight that "'it is often hard to grasp just what the sources of agency are that make a particular event happen' and that this 'ungraspability may be an [essential] aspect of agency.'" But it is a safe bet to begin with the presumption that the locus of political responsibility is human-nonhuman assemblage."<sup>31</sup> The agency of assemblages, as Bennett argues, differs from the strong and autonomous agency aspired to by Augustine,<sup>32</sup> Kant,<sup>33</sup> or an omnipotent God.

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<sup>30</sup> VM, 33. Bennett theorization of vital materialism has affinities with Bruno Latour's notion of actants. Bennett writes, "Bruno Latour's term for a source of action...an actant is neither an object nor a subject but an 'intervener.'" VM, 9.

<sup>31</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 36. See also, Noortje Marres, "Issues Spark a Public into Being: A Key but Often forgotten Point of the Lippmann-Dewey Debate." *Making Things Public*, ed. Bruno Latour and Peter WEIBEL, 208-17. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, For Augustine, agency is thought of in terms of will and freedom. Rather than "strong" will, he is concerned with cultivating a "right" will that required one "to live in accordance with God's will" 60 Augustine, *On Free Choice and the Will*, Bennett does not elaborate beyond saying earlier that Augustine "linked moral agency to free will." (V M, 28) She states, "Agency, then, is not such a clear idea in Augustine." (V M, 28)

<sup>33</sup> Ahmed explains Kant's conception of will is associated with freedom. "Kant writes," in relation to the concept of freedom, "A good will is good not because of what it accomplishes or effects, not by its aptness for the

Instead, the relationship between tendencies, outcomes, trajectories, and effects is seen as more porous, tenuous, and indirect.<sup>34</sup> Bennett's usage of "strong" implies a definition of "weak" that takes on a slightly different connotation, referring to the capacity to bring about change. Augustine, on the other hand, associates weakness with disobedience or sinfulness.

Constructively, one of the important elements to connect theopoetics to politics of material assemblies lies in what Jane Bennett called an "ecological sensibility." In her introduction to *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Bennett discusses what it means to not only think about ecologies but thinking ecologically as a vital source of change. I focus mostly on Bennett's theorization of "the agency of assemblages" to think through the interlinkages between agency and accountability through the lens of a "political ecology of things."<sup>35</sup> Problematizing agency serves as a way to complicate political accountability, as opposed to personal accountability, which is thereby swarmed and complicated by ideas of moral responsibility. Puritan, Victorian, and modern conceptualizations of moral responsibility have fundamental ties to theological conceptualization of the will, obedience, and sin.

In traditions such as American Protestantism and liberalism, that "defines agency as *moral* capacity," intention or an advance plan arises prior to a new event or effect. Agency "involves not mere motion, but willed or intended motion, where motion can only be willed or intended by a *subject*." In the ideologies of these historical traditions,

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attainment of some proposed end, but simply by *virtue of the volition*' ([1785]2005b, 55, emphasis added)." (Ahmed, 60).

<sup>34</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 36.

<sup>35</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 24

motion is most perfectly willed by a reasoning subject determined to be fully human in the image of the able-bodied, neurotypical, property owning, white, cisgender man.

Bennett reiterates, human intentionality is positioned as the most important of all agential factors, the bearer of an exceptional kind of power”<sup>36</sup> The human who is seen as having intention relies on conceptualization of who or what is capable of intending rightly; some bodies are read as more agential than others. (Zakiyyah Iman Jackson argues in *Becoming Human*<sup>37</sup> that the conceptualization of the human subject is plastic, see Chapter 1).

Therefore, thinking about agentic capacity as more distributive and less subject-centered does not reduce the need to critique how subjectivity is shaped by ableism and racism and therefore participates in agential assemblages with power and privilege as contributing actants. On the contrary, the concept of distributive agency attempts to give language to what acts or persists regardless of our human acknowledgement of such fields, forces, and actants.

Bennett argues for reimagining “affective bodies forming assemblages” to highlight “some of the limitations in human-centered theories of action and to investigate some of the tactical implications, for social-science inquiry and for public culture, of a theory of action and responsibility that crosses the human-nonhuman divide.”<sup>38</sup> Bennett’s theory of distributive agency “does not posit a subject as the root cause of an effect” — subject-centered agents. There remains in play, already and always, “a swarm of

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, 34

<sup>37</sup> Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiracist World* (New York: New York University Press, 2020).

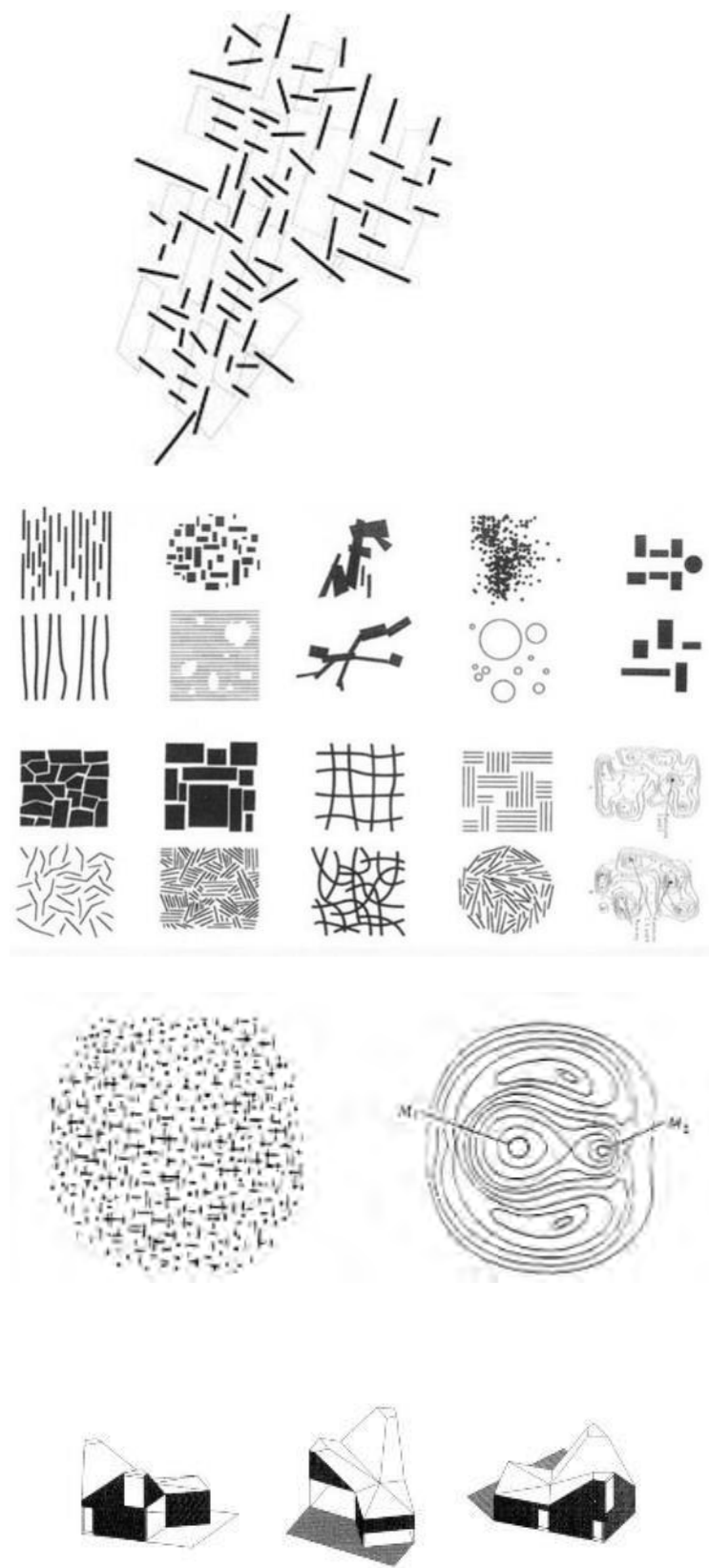
<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, 24.

vitalities” in dynamic oscillation.<sup>39</sup> The political task becomes, Bennet argues, “to identify the contours of the swarm and the kind of relations that obtain between the bits.”<sup>40</sup> The current framework of juridico-politics jeopardizes the undertaking due to a deficiency in tools capable of capturing and conveying the nature of the swarm, or because the available tools are incompatible with—or unrecognizable by—the prevailing epistemological and ontological structures. Theological and philosophical disciplines also face limitations, with their tools confined to their respective explanatory domains. How might the sharing, reorganizing, and application of different tools across disciplines and epistemologies aid in identifying the political ecology of things— “the contours of the swarm” of vitalities?

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<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, 31.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 31-2.





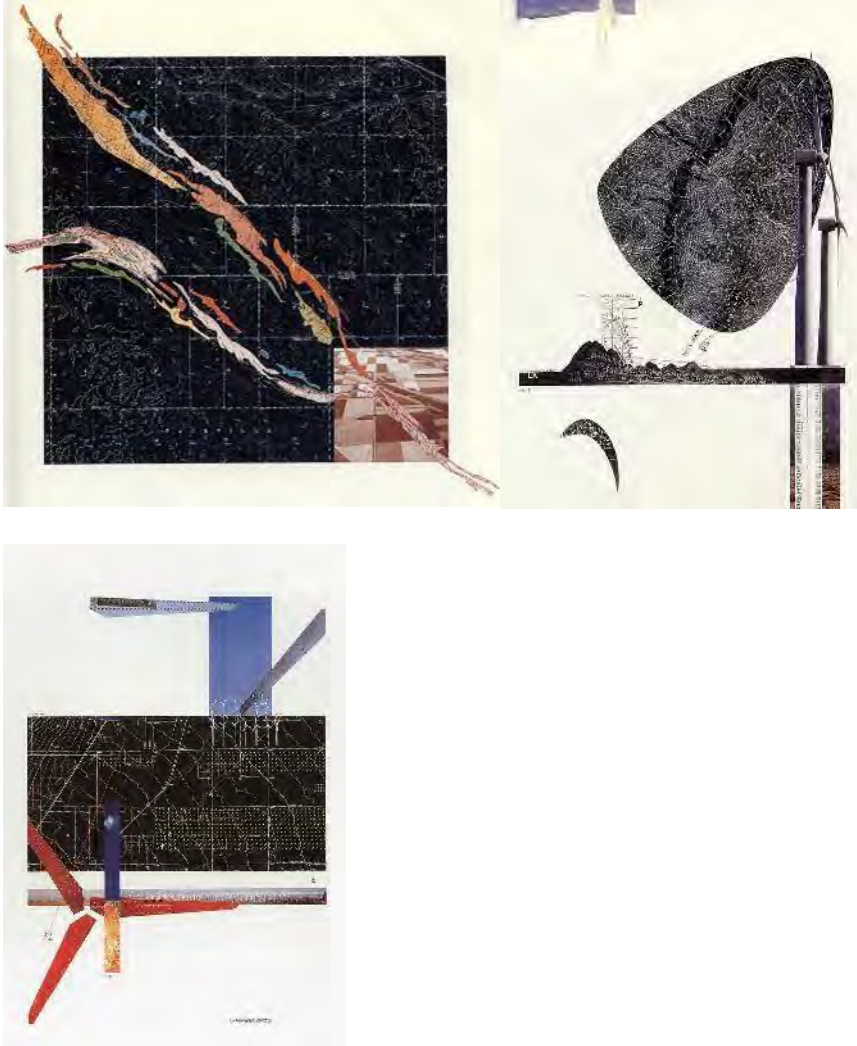
*Figure 61 Stan Allen diagrams "Field Conditions" in Points and Lines: Diagrams and Projects for the City, 1995.*

Ordering systems play a significant role in architecture, including religious structures. However, in order to avoid rigid and dominant structures, new modes of conceptualizing ordering systems within architecture are necessary. Architectural and design tools, as those representative in the work of architects, landscape urbanists, and theorists Stan Allen and James Corner, enable experimentation with a range of techniques aimed at understanding complex systems. Their work examines ordering beyond rigid hierarchies, seeking to describe flexible, field conditions that emphasize the relationships and interactions of a milieu of social, material, and ecological forces.

Stan Allen, an American architect and theorist, expands an understanding of architecture beyond the local or tectonic. He introduces the notion of fields and swarms, emphasizing non-hierarchical relationships. According to Allen, architecture acts as a choreographer that intervenes in the interactions of velocities, vectors, and forces. His approach considers the building in relation to its surrounding topographies, events, and fields, resulting in expressive tectonic arrays. Allen's theorization of the field challenges the subject-object (or figure-ground) separation endemic to the project of modern architecture. It opens up new possibilities for describing transcendence in architecture and reconfigures the relationality between subjects and objects, privileging a negotiation of the relationships between figure and field. By embracing the concept of the field, Allen's approach transforms the traditional understanding of architecture as a static object and instead emphasizes dynamic relationships. The subject-object relationality in architecture becomes more fluid and interconnected. In certain ways, the field allows for

a deeper integration of architecture within its multiplicity of contexts, creating a more responsive and dialogic built environment. Landscape architect James Corner shares Allen's view of architecture and landscapes as interconnected field conditions. Through his work with Field Operations, Corner has applied this approach to large-scale urban design projects. His concepts of "sequence" and "composite territoriality" explore how landscapes mediate between multiple overlapping territories, programs, and temporalities. Similar to Allen, Corner emphasizes dynamic spatial relations over rigid hierarchies.

Both thinkers have created conceptual and visual landscapes that, I contend, facilitate a transdisciplinary conversation between architecture and new materialism and posthuman political theories, such as those developed by Jane Bennett and William Connolly.



*Figure 62 "Taking Measures Across the American Landscape" by James Corner and Alex McLean, 1995.*

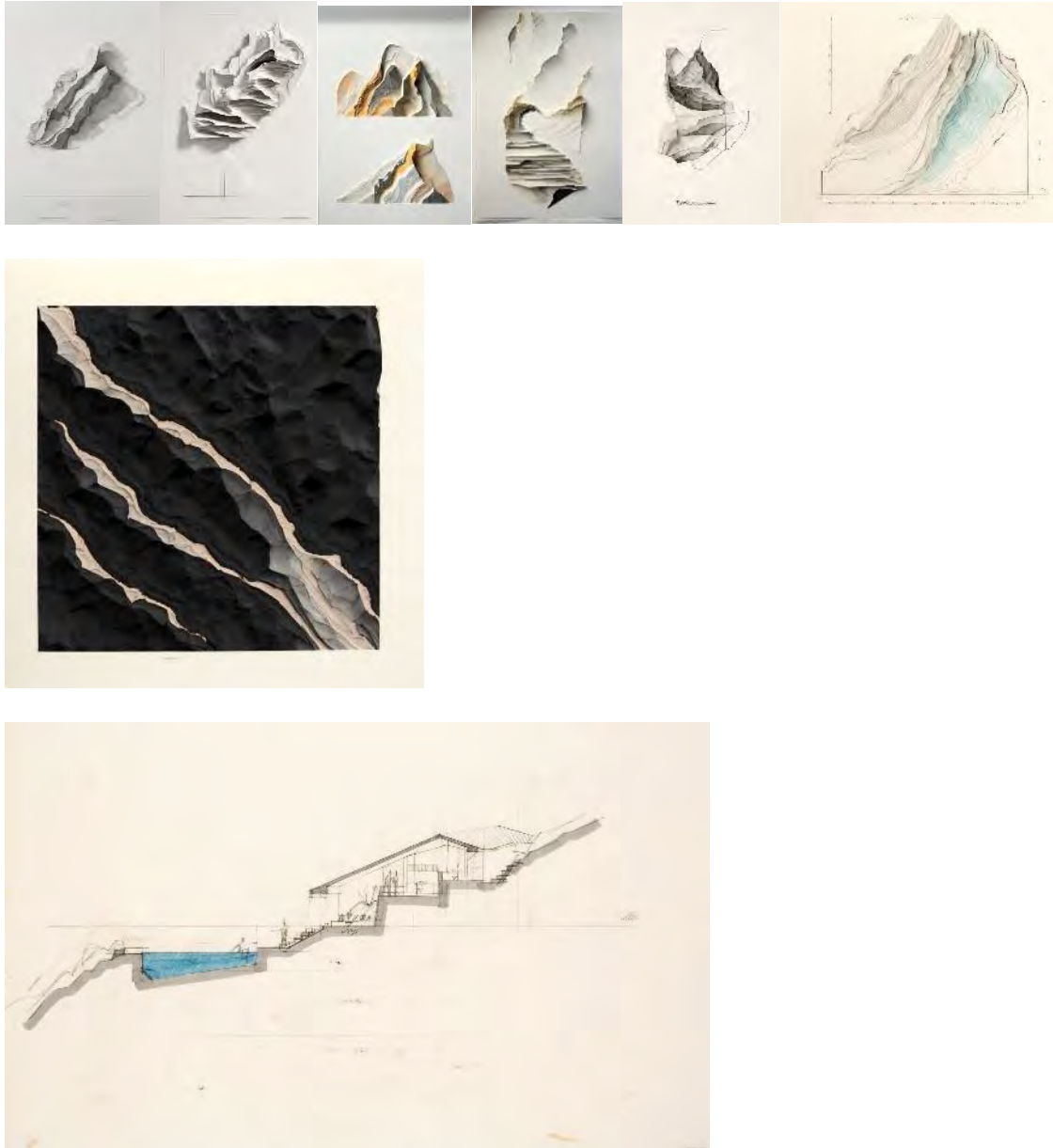


Figure 63R. Kyle Warren "Imaginary Ecologies."

Bennett includes fields like electromagnetic fields among her notion of “vibrant matter,” alongside objects across scales such as responsive cell membranes and city-wide electric grids. In my first reading of *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, I was

immediately struck by Bennett's vivid descriptions of the world around us.<sup>41</sup> She provides a lens for recognizing that space between objects is not empty, but filled with "fields of 'thing-power.'<sup>42</sup> " By thing-power, Bennett refers to matter's "ability to make things happen, to produce effects."<sup>43</sup> Our inability to perceive how built environments exert agency, Bennett argues, "resides in those denied possibilities, in the invisible field that surrounds and infuses the world of objects."<sup>44</sup>

Bennett pushes for a radical notion of agency; distributive agency does not represent just a simple reconsideration of agency. She attempts to go even further than new materialist Diana Coole's "account of a spectrum of agentic capacities, like the kind of agency that is subjected to structural constraints." Claiming it "does not recognize the agency of human-nonhuman assemblages."<sup>45</sup> Bennett's distinction between ecologies of vibrant matter and inter-human-nonhuman combinations of agency highlights "the difficulty of theorizing agency apart from the belief that" humans stand apart, affecting change from the privileged position of being "outside from the order of material nature."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 4.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, 6. "Thing-Power," for Bennett, describes "the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle."

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, 15.

<sup>45</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 36.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, 36-7. Karen Barad's notion of intra-active agency is applicable.

Distributive agency should not be misconstrued as diminishing structural accountability or diluting personal agency, but the potential is present and the tension is not easily resolved. Neither will reductive explanations of cause-effect or responsibility-blame resolve the challenges living-together-in-proximity presents.<sup>47</sup> Bennett's examples of assemblages such as the electrical power grid aims to illustrate this point. She emphasizes that the effects produced by the power grid are distinctive and that proximity plays a significant role in this process. However, proximity is not simply about the spatial location of objects in empty space; it is a more complex concept that takes into account the properties of the assemblage, including the varying quantities and qualities of mass-energy involved. It is important to recognize that infrastructures are integral parts of these assemblages, because they influence circulation and shape our (mis)conceptualizations of what proximity and distance entail.<sup>48</sup>

If an ecological sensibility leads to an exploration of distributive agency, what are the political implications? Bennett recognizes concerns about justice and accountability, and she acknowledges her own conflicting sense of justice within the framework of distributive agency. She ponders, “But must a distributive, composite notion of agency thereby abandon the attempt to hold individuals responsible for their actions or hold officials accountable to the public?”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> See Michael Serres, ed. *Giving Ground: The Politics of Propinquity* (Verso, 1999).

<sup>48</sup> Virilio theorized about speeds and connectivity, which has implications for what is near and far. Globalization is theorized to be a study in the collapse of distance and power to influence as well. Colonialism and its associated technologies as well.

<sup>49</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 37.

It is important to consider whether the proliferation of networks, assemblages, and ecologies adequately addresses everyday micropolitics or if it falls short in its intervention. Does the use of language such as becoming an event complicate pursuits of justice? Does action become blocked, making it a-political or anti-political?<sup>50</sup> It is crucial to approach language about fields and energies with a degree of suspicion when it comes from individuals who seem to want to bypass or distance themselves from discussions of identity, power, violence, and activism. Scholars of ecofeminism, queer ecology, and queer of color critique have been instrumental in navigating these complex issues to ensure they remain politicized and grounded in everyday experiences.<sup>51</sup>

Distributive agency, a key part of Bennett's theorization of a political ecology of things, “does attenuate the blame game, but it does not thereby abandon the project of identifying the sources of harmful effects.”<sup>52</sup> “The blame game,” refers to a culturally and judiciously pursuit to assign responsibility to an individual human agent, or a group of individual agents, with the intent to discipline, punish, rehabilitate pay the victim or victims (society) for loss and suffering by the human(s) that are found at fault and responsible for paying compensatory and punitive damages. Bennett’s example of an energy company's determination of the cause of blackout that “no one is really to blame” illustrates the potential pitfalls “of the blame game,” therefore analysis of power remains

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<sup>50</sup> Donovan Schaefer delves into some of these questions in his book *The Evolution of Affect*.

<sup>51</sup> Queer ecologies denaturalize the construction of the figure of the homosexual, gender, epistemologies, and extended beyond the “canon” to question normative construction of the world that necessarily includes, often unnamed or even unrecognized, calculations of agency and the determinations of the causation of circumstances. See *Queer Ecologies* and *Queer Inhumanisms*

<sup>52</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 37.

essential.<sup>53</sup> A vital materialist account that was intellectually honest would not assign *full* blame to the human agents at the FirstEnergy corporation, but that does not diminish our ethical responsibility to account for events, which include to varying degrees human participants in assemblages. Bennett concentrates the challenge thus:

It is ultimately a matter of political judgment what is more needed today: should we acknowledge the distributive quality of agency to address the power of human-nonhuman assemblages and to resist a politics of blame? Or should we persist with a strategic understatement of material agency in the hopes of enhancing the accountability of a specific human?"<sup>54</sup>

To develop her idea of agency, Bennett folds a "swarm of affiliates" —most prominently efficacy, trajectory, and causality.<sup>55</sup> The "third element in the agentic swarm," causality, "is perhaps the most vague of all."<sup>56</sup>

If one extends the time frame of the action beyond that of even an instant, billiard-ball causality falters. Alongside and inside singular human agents there exists a heterogenous series of actants with partial, overlapping, and conflicting degrees of power and effectivity.<sup>57</sup> . . . Here, causality is more emergent than efficient, more fractal than linear....If efficient causality seeks to rank the actants involved, treating some as external causes and others as dependent effects, emergent causality places the focus on the process as itself an actant, as itself in possession of degrees of agentic capacity.<sup>58</sup>

Bennett goes on to quote William Connolly from "Method, Problem, Faith," where he writes, "The new emergent is shaped not only by external forces that become infused into it but *also by its own previously under-tapped capacities for reception and self-*

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<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, 37.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, 121-122.

<sup>55</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 31.

<sup>56</sup> 32

<sup>57</sup> 32-3

<sup>58</sup> 32-3



*organization.*”<sup>59</sup> Both Bennett and Connolly establish an entangled conception of politics that problematize oversimplified or one-dimensional accounts of a set of political events. In contexts where some bodies are more likely to be cast as causes of disruption, discomfort, or friction, (see Interlude 4) proposing an alternative theory of *political causality* acts as a form of resistance against the totalizing ordering of social-spatial arrangements.

## MULTIPLE AGENCIES

Experience cannot be reduced to the individual “volition-intentionality-agency triad.” Experience “is collective—ecological—at its very core.”<sup>60</sup>  
—Erin Manning

Erin Manning's critique of the volition-intentionality-agency triad and advocacy for more collective, ecological understandings of experience provide vital philosophical and political context for situating Jane Bennett's vital materialist theory.<sup>61</sup> While Bennett focuses on decentering the human subject through distributed, emergent models of agency, Manning connects her project to the exclusion of blackness and neurodiversity from universalized notions of the willful, intentional subject. Her concept of “agencement” as an alternative to individual agency mirrors Bennett's language of agentic assemblages and processes. However, Manning foregrounds how assumptions about controlled, volitional experience depend on constructs of white neurotypicality. In this

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<sup>59</sup> Connolly, “Method, Problem, Faith”

<sup>60</sup> Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture* (Duke University Press, 2016), 117.

<sup>61</sup> Manning writes, In *The Minor Gesture* I explored what I called the “volition-intentionality-agency triad” (2016, 6). The concern was how this triad produces neurotypicality as the measure of lived experience Erin Manning, *For a Pragmatics of the Useless* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 64.

way, Manning's emphasis on the collective and sensory inherently expands the frameworks for conceptualizing Bennett's vital materialist agencies. She contributes crucial perspectives on how dominant ideas of agency, intention, and subjectivity function to marginalize difference. This enables deeper consideration of the political valences of Bennett's ecological sensibility and provides connective tissue between new materialisms, critical race theory, and neurodiversity studies. Manning thus helps ecologically situate vital materialisms within broader challenges to humanist notions of will, agency and normalized subjectivities.

Manning introduces the volition-intentionality-agency triad in her book, *The Minor Gesture*, where she advocates for a shift towards an understanding of experience that transcends categorical limitations and embraces the nonvolitional aspects of sensation.

The volition-intentionality-agency triad rests on the presupposition that to be worthy of the count is to be the driver of experience. The control over action that undergirds the triad rests on a belief that there is a willful separation between body and world on the one hand and experience and subjectivity on the other.<sup>62</sup> . . . To not be able to account for your actions in the vocabulary of intentionality, as all classical autistics know, is to be considered incapable of learning, of proving yourself useful, of being assimilable. But freedom does not live in this account of free will.<sup>63</sup> . . . Neurotypicality is deeply threatened by the power of the nonvolitional in experience: a focus on the primacy of the nonvolitional breaks down the volition-intentionality-agency triad that claims to direct and control experience.<sup>64</sup>

Manning's targeting of will, agency, and volition discloses the importance of relation and the complex ecologies that shape events. She introduces agencement as a way to

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<sup>62</sup> Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 238.

<sup>63</sup> Henri Bergson argues in *Time and Free Will*, (1910). 239.

<sup>64</sup> Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 279.

foreground the operations that affect how events come into expression. It questions the traditional understanding of agency and argues for a collective and ecological perspective on experience. Manning further develops questions about neurodiverse life in *A Pragmatics for the Useless* in which she names process philosopher A. N. Whitehead has an influence on her work, evident in Whitehead's statement, "What has agency, or, preferably, agencement, is the process itself, the process in its schizzing, not the figure of a preexisting subject."<sup>65</sup> Every occasion, every event is an agencement, a singular reorienting of the conditions of experience."<sup>66</sup> Through her engagement with ecological and process thought, Erin Manning disrupts the presupposition, similarly to Bennett, that experience is primarily driven by an individual executive agency—a model of agency reflective of white neurotypicality. The recognition or determination of agency implies the assessment of capability and capacity. "Capacities" were theorized by political philosophers such as John Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, to be reflective of a hierarchy of "faculties, extending upward to the perfect intelligence of angels and downward to the entirely deficient idiot."<sup>67</sup>

The universalized subject's free will, a humanist achievement, is founded on individualized notions of agency, will, and responsibility. Manning turns to Saidiya

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<sup>65</sup> "Schizzing" is a reference to Manning's use and development of the concept of "schizoanalysis" in her book *The Minor Gesture*. It also reaches back to Deleuze and Guatarri's development of the term in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. "schizoanalysis." Manning states, "The approach I am taking here, in my calling into question the centrality of neurotypicality as grounding structure for existence as we practice it, might be called schizoanalytic, not because there is an encounter with schizophrenia per se, but because the account involves an engagement with the cleaving of experience."

<sup>66</sup> Whitehead 1978, 29. Fn. 3, 36.

<sup>67</sup> Stacy Clifford Simplician, *The Capacity Contract: Intellectual Disability and the Question of Citizenship* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 26.

Hartman to further complicate “the human” achievement of volitional agency after noting that Hartman “makes an adjacent argument around blackness and black life” in *Scenes of Subjection*. As Manning describes, Hartman carefully shows how blackness was never incorporated into developing the modern human subject position. Threading her critique of constructing the neurotypical subject as normative with Hartman's insight, Manning states that “blackness was simply never solicited to recognize itself in the volition-intentionality-agency triad”—a privilege reserved in America primarily for white, cismale Christian subjects.<sup>68</sup>

## EVENTS AND PARTICIPATION: ECOLOGIES OF MATTER AND SCALE

Field conditions move from the one toward the many, from individuals to collectives, from objects to fields.  
—Stan Allen<sup>69</sup>

What kind of architecture can participate in relation to ecologies of matter and scale?  
-- Andrés Jaque<sup>70</sup>

The prior examinations of will, agency, and experience provide a conceptual foundation for exploring the implications of vital materialist thought across multiple scales. Therefore, architects who create sensory and material interventions with these scalar transformations, such as Andrés Jaque, emerge as appealing disciplinary partners. Whereas the will and agency have frequently been interpreted through an individualistic lens, an ecological perspective invites consideration of distributed forces entangled across

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<sup>68</sup> Hartman, 65. Saidiya Hartman quote from *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 117.

<sup>69</sup> Stan Allen, “Field Conditions,” 2

<sup>70</sup> Andrés Jaque, *Superpowers of Scale* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2020).

diverse spatial and temporal registers. This aligns with Jane Bennett's focus on emergent causality within assemblages and Erin Manning's advocacy for collective experience.

William Connolly's work synthesizes these threads by bringing a "philosophy of becoming" to bear on capitalist ecologies. His attentiveness to cosmologies across scales of chronotime, viscosity, and metamorphosis resonates with new materialist efforts to move beyond anthropocentric frameworks. This transition toward ecologies of matter and scale strives to hold together worlds of process and flux with concrete sociopolitical implications. It serves as a springboard for asking how built environments participate in conviviality across evolving configurations of human and nonhuman actants.

Theopoetics of architecture strives to hold together what is often viewed as being in tension, the world of becoming and creating (*poiesis* and *creare*) and the world of politics, practice, and building (*politike*, *praktikē*, and *techne*). The crafting of ecological perspectives in this section is influenced by the political theory of William Connolly, the theo-poetics of matter in Catherine Keller's engagement with new materialism, and the methodologies in the transscalar work of Andrés Jaque. It explores the entanglements between human and nonhuman forces in the ecologies of organisms and their environments, acknowledging their connections at multiple scales of space and time. The goal is to analyze events and question assumptions about causality and accountability in socio-political-economic processes related to the built environment.

For the purposes of generating a theo-poetics of architecture that can account for ecologies of matter, I turn to scholars attuned to a "cosmos of becoming set on multiple

scales of chronotime, viscosity, power of self-regulation, and capacities for metamorphosis” and bring those insights to bear on “the ecology of late capitalism.”<sup>71</sup>

In *The Fragility of Things*, William Connolly does not argue that “too few political economists are interested in environmental issues;” rather, he claims “too few bring a philosophy of becoming to the inquiry.”<sup>72</sup> William Connolly luringly describes a way of thinking that encourages transdisciplinary dialogue and extra-political conversations across matter and scale but in a shared register that offer opportunities for interventions and participation in mutual becoming and poetics (poiesis: creating/making) of conviviality.<sup>73</sup>

Where considerations of architecture focused on built environments and spatial relations give the impression that the field of action is limited, Connolly expands the frame to analyze self-organizing ecologies at multiple interacting scales. His attention to geological, biological, climatic, economic, and political systems resonates with efforts to move beyond anthropocentric and human-centered perspectives. Connolly further enriches an ecological sensibility by challenging assumptions we impose on events, causality, and agency. His cosmopolitical orientation toward becoming otherwise invites generative experiments in collective worldmaking, welcoming to a theopoetics of becoming (Keller). Bridging previous conceptual stepping stones, Connolly's emphasis on participation across human and nonhuman force fields catalyzes a shift toward material agencies and vitalist ontologies. Connolly's work propels political

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<sup>71</sup> William E Connolly, *The Fragility of Things Self-Organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism* (Duke University Press, 2013), 30

<sup>72</sup> Connolly, *The Fragility of Things*, 30.

<sup>73</sup> Reference Lynn Margulis and symbiogenesis.

considerations into new ecological terrains that encourage new constructions of architecture and new architectures for our conceptual-disciplinary constructions.

By engaging with cosmologies and relational ontologies, we challenge prevailing notions of causality, agency, and accountability within socio-political-economic processes as they manifest in connection with the built environment. Adopting ecological and cosmological perspectives allows us to interrogate events critically as either enclosures or a collection of objects designed, placed, or cultivated for intents and purposes and seen and unforeseen outcomes that have connections to systems beyond the local site.

Connolly sets out the cosmic situation we find ourselves in:

I believe the human is both imbricated with and periodically overmatched by a cosmos composed of multiple, interacting force fields moving at different speeds. We are today at least as closely implicated in several nonhuman force fields as the city of Lisbon found itself to be with that earthquake, tsunami, and fire.<sup>74</sup>

Connolly begins by sharing the events surrounding the Lisbon earthquake and the accompanying interpretations about the cause or meaning behind the events to illustrate his interest in environmental systems entangled with economic, political, historical, and religious systems.<sup>75</sup> Environment-infrastructures have effects that are not best explained by beginning with human intentional action. Connolly emphasizes the importance of recognizing how socio-environmental systems not only reflect current determinations but also influence the future structuring of organizational systems. He advocates for acknowledging the capacity of systems to self-organize in ways that transcend human

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<sup>74</sup> Connolly, *The Fragility of Things*, 7.

<sup>75</sup> “Naturecultures,” previously theorized by feminist scholar Donna Haraway (2003), show up here in connection with interpretive frameworks that assign cause and attempt explanation.

rationality and intentionality. Examples of such "self-organizing ecologies" that Connolly cites range from climate and biological systems to geological and economic ones.

Humans, he argues, have a "tendency to import an inner rationality or a final purpose into them."<sup>76</sup> Connolly's assessment of the Lisbon earthquake leads him to argue that to address how major events operate, how an event begins or ends, one must begin by asking, "What is an event?"<sup>77</sup> Following the theories of self-organization, events cannot be fully explained by "simple intentionalism" or "ontological finalism."<sup>78</sup> He continues: "A cosmos composed of innumerable, interacting temporal force fields with varying degrees of self-organizational capacity subtracts from it both finalism and the sufficiency of blind, efficient cause. The sufficiency of simple intentionality bites the dust too."<sup>79</sup>

Although the broadening of our "political and cosmic sensibilities" is commendable, apprehensions arise regarding its repercussions on quotidian existence and the particularity of corporeal entities.<sup>80</sup> The array of force fields delineated by Connolly could be construed as favoring deterritorialization, while neglecting the requisite instruments for specific bodies to effectuate re-territorialization.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Connolly, *The Fragility of Things*, 7.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, 9.

<sup>81</sup> (See, Sara Ahmed, "Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of New Materialism (2008)," Donovan Schaeffer, "The Evolution of Affect Theory (2019) See also: Noela Davis, "New Materialism and Feminism's Anti-Biologism: A Response to Sara Ahmed," 2019.



One might contend that Connolly's enumeration of varied force fields—operating politically, ecologically, and economically—sidesteps consideration of marginalized bodies. This oversight suggests a form of escapism through conceptual breadth, privileging deterritorialization while inadvertently stripping away the means essential for certain bodies to reestablish their territory.<sup>82</sup> Our commitments often manifest affectively within us, resonating in our core when they are constrained, manipulated, belittled, overlooked, or suppressed. On the one hand, energies and emotions can limit subjectivity, for example, they take on gendered connotations, Ahmed warns. On the other, hand the magnitude of intra-active (Barad) fields in intra-action (Barad) threatens to dissolve an actual human, someone we might touch, or name, or live in proximity, identifies, affectively, the fragility of things in a world of becomings Connolly seeks to stress. I do not wish to set up a false binary, quite the contrary, but the feeling of conflict, which itself can be generative, persists.

Acts of creative becoming, “freedom: to be and to become otherwise than we are;” are “conditioned by the past, but they are not explicable by either causal antecedents or dialectical processes through which the past unfolds into the future.”<sup>83</sup> If this is the

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Vol. 16(1): 67–80; <http://ejw.sagepub.com> DOI: 10.1177/1350506808098535. See also, Elizabeth Wilson, *Gut Feminism*, Duke University Press, 2015). In which she explores “the remarkable intra-actions of melancholic and pharmaceutical events in the human body,” 13.

<sup>82</sup> Connolly, *The Fragility of Things*, 28. Connolly lists force fields across two pages to describe the sheer fragility of things; “Most force fields have some self-regulatory power, interinvolvement with other fields, and periodic susceptibility to radical disruption, though there are important variations between them.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, 78-9.

situation, then the discursive processes of retroactively assigning causes to an event entail much more than a single human body can muster. Events taken as ecologies of human-nonhuman relationality at multiple scales of space and time cannot be totally accounted for by economies of causality–agency–intentionality–volition.<sup>84</sup>

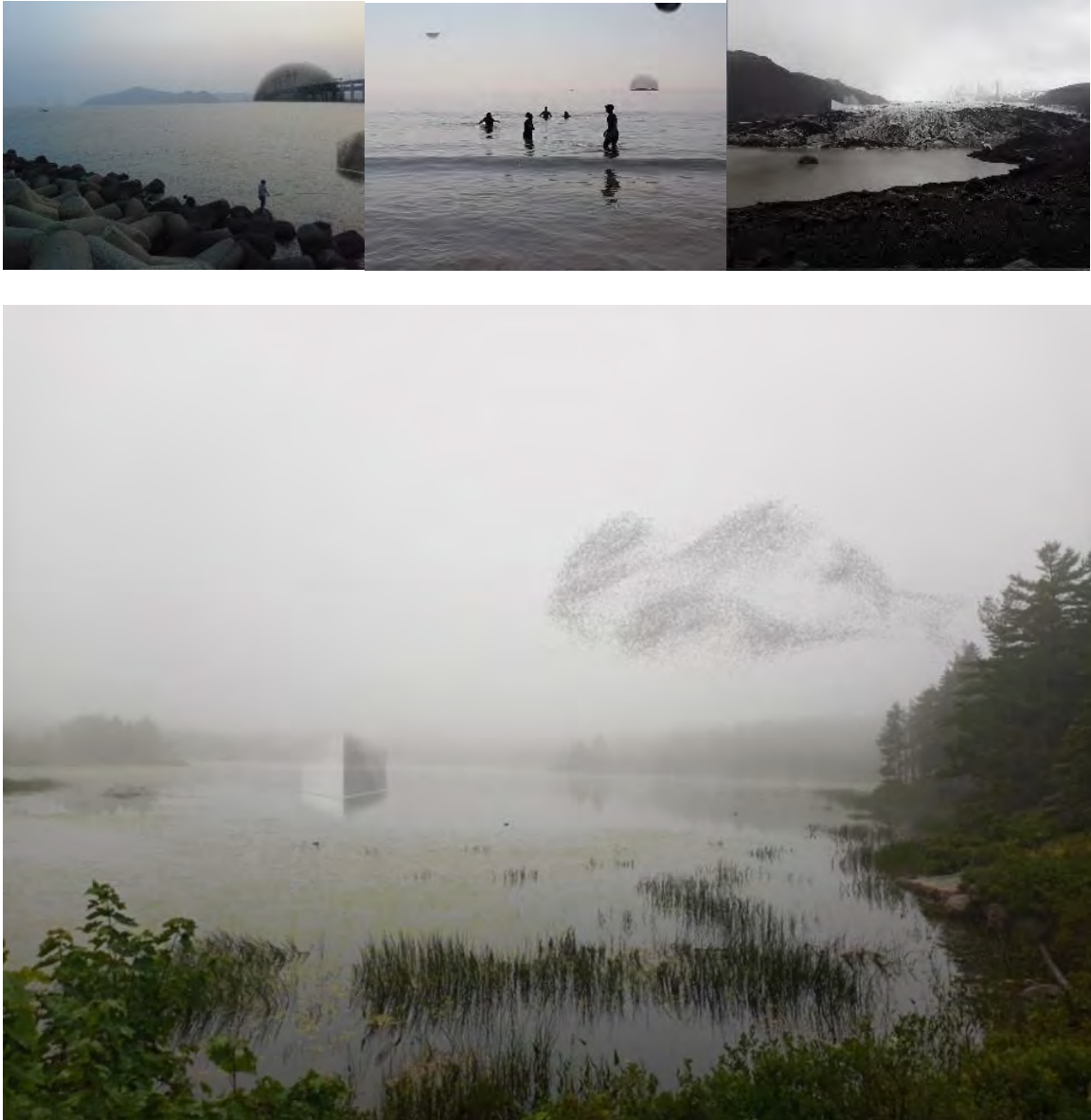
The hegemonic neoliberal capitalist system rarely exhibits gaps or fissures in its organizing structures. In the absence of perceptible cracks, Connolly acknowledges that, “It may seem that you must either embrace the system with fervor, withdraw as much as possible from it, or wait for an explosion that changes everything rapidly.”<sup>85</sup> However, experiments in assembling human and nonhuman organisms, varying in their resemblances to concepts like “infrastructures” and “architecture,” have the potential to disseminate new ways of conceptualizing the construction of human-nonhuman ecologies of capacity and agency. In developing such conceptual cracks and fissures, greater flexibility may emerge in navigating rigid systems without wholly embracing or withdrawing from their influences.

## BECOMINGS

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<sup>84</sup> Connolly notes, “A theory that links agency to vitality,” (I might say “vibrancy” instead), “and in which intrusions from the outside periodically become catalyzing events, is one in which the active, masterful idea of the ‘agent’ enacting a preformed set of intentions gives considerable ground to opaque processes of self-organization that unfold within and between us as a new intention or relation crystallizes within a self or through negotiations between constituencies.” 145

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, 189



*Figure 64R. Kyle Warren "Ecstatic Landscapes."*

## ECOLOGICAL THINKING IN ARCHITECTURE

It is important to understand that architectural form can only be understood from a relational perspective, looking at the way that it operates beyond its confinement, in alliance with others. As such, it engages with specific processes by which the "spectrum of the possible" can be extended.<sup>86</sup>

—Andrés Jaque

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<sup>86</sup> "I am referring to Isabella Stengers' notion of cosmopolitics as the expansion of this spectrum," Jaque notes. "The Dissident Architect Andrés Jaque. Reflections on Multimedia, Transscalar and Transspecies Architecture" <https://koozarch.com/interviews/the-dissident-architect-andres-jaque-reflections-on-multimedia-transscalar-and-transspecies-architecture>

Some of the language and concepts used in affect theory and new materialism have been present in landscape architecture since the 1990s. Stan Allen is recognized for his significant contribution in introducing terms such as fields and emergence, which are familiar to Deleuzians.<sup>87</sup> Despite the significant influence of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatics, chaos theory, global networks, non-Euclidean geometry, and quantum theory on architectural theory for several decades, practices that foreground ecological thinking and approach architecture fundamentally from this perspective remain rare. The term 'ecology' itself is multifaceted: some design practices skew towards environmentalism, embracing and extending beyond conservation and sustainability to include climate resilience and ecosystem adaptability. Other approaches to ecological architecture closely collaborate with science, engineering, and technology, spearheading innovations in new materials, computational methods, and artificial intelligence, as seen in biophilic design and bio-design, or gen-design. Andrés Jaque, through his architecture firm The Office for Political Innovation, builds upon political ecologies and cosmologies, forging what may be read as a shared theoretical language with Connolly and Keller. [In a previous chapter I the described methodology and practice of Eyal Weizman's office

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<sup>87</sup> The promise of emphasizing field conditions as a strategy raises questions about modeling and representation in design fields. The introduction of technologies like NURB, CAD, and 3D modeling has sparked debates about the value of traditional sketching in design. Someone outside of architecture, or even the humanities or theology, might wonder about the unfamiliar tools and forms of communication and representation used in the field.

This turn towards modeling and representation cuts across various disciplines, including landscape architecture, geology, climate science, and tectonics. It gives rise to new questions about parameters, the position of the observer, constraints, hidden variables, patterning, measuring devices, affectus and affectio in representational models, the aesthetics of flows, and the position and power of those who produce these models. The project opens up discussions about equations without context and the potential places to explore.

See also, K. Michael Hayes, *Architecture Theory Since 1968*.

Forensic Architecture as another way to enter into investigations of causal events and followed Stan Allen's move of also using fields and ecologies in a more of a "tactical sense," which he calls "in the field."] <sup>88</sup>

Whereas new materialist thinkers like Jane Bennett decentralize agency across human and nonhuman actants, architect Andrés Jaque extends this orientation through his articulation of a "transscalar" architecture. Jaque conceives of architecture as an "extended gathering of heterogeneous entities that operate in different temporal and spatial configurations" across infrastructures, daily interactions, microscopic processes, and geological scales (*Superpowers of Scale*, 15-16). Rather than viewing buildings as contained objects, he approaches them relationally, as entangled with diverse systems. This resonates with Bennett's assemblages and distributed agency. It also echoes Keller's vision of ethical participation within entangled worldly becomings.

Jaque positions architecture as an intervention into existing situations, mobilizing the "critical mass embedded in materiality" to "reconfigure power relations" (Hirsch). His Climate House operates within an ecosystem, repairing and enhancing biodiversity. Domesticity becomes about "cosmopolitics" ' situating bodies and forms of life together (KoozArch). This thinking parallels Bennett's ethical concerns within capitalist ecology and Keller's ecopolitical materializations. Jaque stresses architecture's inherent multimedia nature, taking responsibility within collective realities. His affirmation of more-than-human ontologies also fosters new worlds, as Connolly's cosmopolitics encourages.

[Architecture] mobilizes and articulates extended gatherings of heterogeneous entities that operate in different temporal and spatial configurations—the time and

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<sup>88</sup> Stan Allen, "Field Conditions"

spatiality of infrastructures, the time of daily interaction, the instantaneity and the microscopic scale of intercellular and molecular action, the latency of online transcontinental transmission, the slow time and territorial scale of geological evolution. To see architecture in this way is not to undermine architectural objecthood. On the contrary, it is from this perspective that the political dimension of form-production, the effects and influences that form leaves in its wake, can be most clearly understood. The material specificity of built objects is crafted to define their entanglement with others.” – Andrés Jaque (*Superpowers of Scale*, 15-16).

Ultimately, Jaque's transscalar approach enlivens architecture's participation across material agencies, advancing ethical possibilities for reordering unjust relations.

An ecological sensibility and notions of distributed agency here unlock possibilities for a theopoetics of architectural intervention into creative-construction processes. Jaque's approach to material ecologies tends to decenter the intentional human subject as the driver of assemblies of material processes, inviting architecture to participate creatively within vibrant material ecologies across diverse scales.

Rambla-Climate House also complicates species-matter relationships. Jaques' approach to architecture participates in an openness that does not limit itself to a “cause” or a “theme.” Climate change is the direct referent in the Rambla-Climate House, but his description of architecture opens to a posthuman, new materialist embodiment that ‘rethinks’ relationality and has ramifications that include climate concerns as well as very much human concerns such as political violence. The in-between actants are often immaterial, non-carbon-based, and extra-human. The translational language of material ecologies invites transdisciplinary perspectives.

Stacy Alaimo's ecologically-minded posthumanist scholarly work gives attention to the built environment, although it does not directly involve architectural practice. Her perspective on the built environment implies that architecture, in its current state, tends to be overly rigid and bound by established norms and regulations, making it inadequate for

addressing the dynamic energy flows associated with climate considerations. She argues that the built environment is heavily influenced by institutions that solidify and excessively dictate social-spatial arrangements, often disregarding the interconnectedness of ecological systems. From an external viewpoint, it may appear that ecological considerations do not carry significant weight within the field of architecture. From an external viewpoint, it may appear that ecological considerations do not carry significant weight within the field of architecture. Alaimo writes, in the *Posthuman Glossary*, “The figure/ground relation between the human and the environment dissolves as the outline of the human is traversed by substantial material interchanges. Mapping those interchanges across all species and at all scales is the prelude to trans-corporeal ethics and politics.”<sup>89</sup>

Recent turns in architectural design hint that architectural thinkers are not frozen in obsessions of forms or object-based metaphysics. Figures such as Jaque, along with his team at the Office of Political Innovation, are skilled at more than the aestheticized design of a visual object; they include people who practice working at different scales of materiality and time, architects and designers who deeply recognize their embeddedness in economic and political relays, who recognize the impact of decision making goes beyond the building and exists regardless of an object that is traditionally recognized as architecture. The fields, forces, and metabolization of material and species are, as I hope I have demonstrated, a part of some adept architectural practitioners and theorists.

Theological and philosophies of religion concerned with ecology, political theologies of

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<sup>89</sup> Rosi Braidotti (Anthology Editor), Maria Hlavajova (Anthology Editor), *The Posthuman Glossary*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.

land and ground, and decolonial projects have shared interests and increasingly shared language to engage across material constructions and assemblies.

Alaimo makes strong indictments of architecture, sentiments I have shared throughout my critique of epistemologies of architecture through this dissertation. She writes in *Exposed*: "In fact, architecture itself is part of that dubious group of achievements used to distinguish the human from the animal, along with toolmaking and language."<sup>90</sup> She continues, "predominant paradigms of sustainability, including those within architecture, employ a managerial sense of distance, aiming to construct technical fixes to environmental problems. The human in this scenario is an expert, a problem solver, an engineer, a rational, calculating entity who is not vulnerable, fleshy, or interconnected with material processes, but stands outside, constructing the world."<sup>91</sup>

Jaque/Office for Political Innovation's Rambla Climate-House does not fit neatly into these descriptions. The project's description illuminates ambition toward the materialization of assemblages of ecological/architectural/political entanglement:

The Rambla Climate-House works as a climatic and ecological device. . . to contribute to reparations for the environmental and climate damage caused by over-urbanization in Molina de Segura. . . Following the reparation of the hydro-thermal conditions of the rambla, glimpses of its former more-than-human life have rapidly re-emerged after a one year period. Now, brachypodiums, myrtles, mastic trees, fan palms, oleanders, and fire trees grow in the elliptical section. Insects, birds, and lagomorphs find shelter in it.

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<sup>90</sup> Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times*, Minnesota Press, 2016, 20.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, 32. Additional resources include: Dodds and Tavernor's *Body and Building: Essays on the Changing Relation of Body and Architecture* and those in Bloomer and Moore's *Body, Memory, and Architecture*.<sup>61</sup>





Figure 65 Molina de Segura (Murcia) Spain, 2018-2021. The Rambla Climate-House is the result of a collaboration between architects Andrés Jaque/Office for Political Innovation and Miguel Mesa del Castillo; the edaphologist María Martínez Mena; and the ecologists Paz Parrondo Celdrán and Rubén Vives. Jaque provides a philosophical interpretation of Climate-House: "I think that the climate house is first of all climate because it operates relationally, or operates in the intersection of very diverse systems, but it is also cosmopolitical in the way its overall function is to provide broader interspecies representations or, better, presence."<sup>92</sup>—Andrés Jaque

<sup>92</sup> "The Dissident Architect Andrés Jaque. Reflections on Multimedia, Transscalar and Transspecies Architecture." <https://koozarch.com/interviews/the-dissident-architect-andres-jaque-reflections-on-multimedia-transscalar-and-transspecies-architecture>

Rambla-Climate House responds to processes that are transcalar and acknowledges agency and causality beyond the State and human individuals. The human is not the prime mover or causal agent in the Rambla-Climate House ecosystem. Jaque imagines the projects live in their own ecological causal networks that embrace agents outside of a contractual assignation of blame, while also not forgetting the histories of human-environmental violence. The understanding of spatial construction and body mobilization is more than what current political frames can account for and are not adequately described in current legal definitions of justice. Architectural-ecological thinking might become a useful tool in the engagement with “problems” that are innately transcalar and transcorporeal.

Architecture reframed for theological discourse in conjunction with practitioners and scholars such as Keller Esterling, Sean Lally, David Gissen, and Michael Benedikt opens possibilities for co-creating conviviality in proximity. These scholars do not share the same approaches, and I’d argue theological and philosophical engagement would help further clarify their distinct approaches (which the transdisciplinary praxis oriented projects exhibited in the Interludes and the Conclusion point toward). Theopoetics of architecture is a proposal; it is also a naming of the experiment that is taken place in this dissertation and in my praxis and teaching beyond the bounds of these pages. The language is not overly formalized, as it means to practice an orientation to conversations and relationships.<sup>93</sup> This aligns with Catherine Keller's vision of cultivating ecosmopolitical materializations through a cosmopolitical ethics. Architecture is

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<sup>93</sup> The ecological viewpoint is not limited to the reparation of more-than-human ecosystems. Material ecologies that include built environments made up of trans-corporeal architectures introduce added elements into causal ecologies that impact political attribution and conceptualization of responsibility."

reimagined not just as designed objects but as interventions that can disrupt unjust power relations. William Connolly's philosophy of becoming resonates with an ecological sensibility demanding such reconfigurations.

An ecological imagination questions assumptions that shape architecture while opening up possibilities for architecture to mediate ethical and posthuman entanglements across space and time. Architecture's creative participation within lively material conviviality becomes newly imaginable. A theopoetics of architecture grounded in ecological thinking holds promise for fostering life-affirming built environments within just material entanglements. The parallels between Keller's ecotheopoetics of becoming and Jaque's transcalar ecosystems of articulations are intriguing. Keller's theopoetics disrupts theologies and cosmologies that establish "an omnipotent God who could have created the world only *ex nihilo*."<sup>94</sup> Jaque denies the myth that architecture begins from nothing, he said, "there is no possibility of a *tabula rasa*, the medium already exists, so architecture necessarily unfolds as multimedia and, once again, I do not think that [interpreting architecture as an isolated media] is an option."<sup>95</sup>

Being transscalar, or the awareness and acknowledgement of a transscalar condition is not in itself a form of dissidence. Dissidence, instead, is the recognition that transscularity is a site for politics, is itself political. It is also important to understand that an acknowledgement of life as more-than-human requires new forms of justice that are not based on centralisation and colonisation, on extractivism, but rather on notions of mutual care. This is the key point here;

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94 An Yountae quoting Catherine Keller's *Face of the Deep*. Yountae, 132.

95 Andrés Jaque. He makes this declaration after acknowledging his intellectual indebtedness to Bruno Latour: "The climate crisis or inequality unfold as multimedia realities to the extent that they are becoming a medium where the physical and technological, the communicational and the compositional are impossible to separate."

the notion of a more-than-human life requires a different understanding of politics as new forms of dissidence and activism are activated.<sup>96</sup>

An ecological view requires frameworks that trace causes and responsibilities across this wider terrain, challenging simplistic notions of "social problems." We must consider distributed agencies across bureaucracies, systems, and infrastructures that operate within events influencing individuals. Only through such an expanded lens can we foster just, ethical, and convivial materializations, cultivating potentials within complex assemblages. An ecological sensitivity attuned to participatory becoming across material scales holds promise for nurturing possibilities within ongoing configurations (or architectures) of power, constraint, and opportunity.

The connection between an architectural "climate project" and a "political project" takes place at the metaphysical and epistemological level. The Rambla Climate-house is then an intervention on an existing assemblage." The intervention in an existing system constitutes a climatic awareness and a reconfiguration of participation, cause and effect. I hope I have demonstrated that ecologically distributed notions of agency, materials processes, and architectural participation align fruitfully with emerging theopoetic conversations in seeking to reimagine architecture's role within dynamic material worlds of becoming. The ecological imagination can nourish a poetics of conviviality within fields of architectural action, attuning architects to creative potentiality within complex human and nonhuman assemblages. Events such as Operation Clean Sweep illustrate the limitations of discourses of will, agency, and individual subjectivity because of the unequal all too human attribution of disruptive

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<sup>96</sup> Andrés Jaque, "The Dissident Architect," <https://koozarch.com/interviews/the-dissident-architect-andres-jaque-reflections-on-multimedia-transscalar-and-transspecies-architecture>

attributes. A broader perspective recognizes diverse agencies among human and nonhuman actors. Targeted individuals are entangled within complex material systems that shape their lives unequally. Simultaneously Operation Clean Sweep itself cannot be explained solely by officials' rational decisions as it too emerges from multiple institutional assemblages.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

TOWARD A THEOPOETICS OF ARCHITECTURE



Figure 66 "Dream Home" R. Kyle Warren

Architecture is always an intervention into the existing. But intervention nowadays is also about producing the documents and mobilizing the knowledge that allows things to be reconfigured.<sup>1</sup>

—Andrés Jaque, "Rearticulating the Social"

As Michel Foucault has pointed out, while there are constraining architectures, there are no specifically 'liberating' architectures. 'Liberty,' he says, 'is a practice'. . . Nonhierarchical compositions cannot guarantee an open society or equality in politics.<sup>2</sup>

—Stan Allen, "Field Conditions"

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<sup>1</sup> Andrés Jaque, "Rearticulating the Social," *e-flux*, August 2019. <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/positions/280206/rearticulating-the-social/#:~:text=Architecture%20is%20always%20an%20intervention,can%20happen%20in%20one%20take>. See also, Andrés Jaque, James Graham, and Office, *Superpowers of Scale* (New York, Ny Columbia University, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Stan Allen, "Field Conditions" in *Points + Lines: Diagrams and Projects for the City* (1985; repr., New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2012). How do we "rethink conventional institutional form through the concept of the field?," 12.

## THEOPOETIC FUTURES: BETWEEN THE MUNDANE AND THE SPECULATIVE

Theological questions need not be viewed as an extraneous addition to the crowded daily discussions concerning specific proposals to (re)construct our built worlds and assembled relations. The use of theological language is not a prerequisite for disciplines to explore speculative questions about *poiesis*, *processes of becoming*, particularly in the realms of science (emergence, genetics, and cosmology), economics (laissez-faire neoliberal capitalism), and politics (state-craft). Poiesis—to make, to create, the process of coming into existence—in a (post)secular age might be able to forget its beginnings in theopoiesis, however, modern efforts to transcend religious themes have mistakenly assumed theological energies are un-entangled with political and economic ecologies of housing and homelessness. Poiesis, and its related concept *techne* contained in architecture, does not limit modes or frames of becoming. Another way of talking about the entanglement of the act of creating and the process of creativity or creation, is to talk about what worlds are possible.

The questions that involve potential futures or possible pasts and presents are not just rethinking the politics of the future, they are considering “ontological politics” embedded in processes of cultivating or building one future over another. The language is reminiscent of Keller’s theopoetics. In *The Decolonial Abyss*, recognizing Keller’s apophatic theopoetics as an ally in the effort to decolonize the abyss of creation, An Yountae describes Keller’s theopoetics, specifically as she develops it in *Face of the Deep*, “By deconstructing the linear notion of origin that inscribes a cosmology with a

clear beginning and end, Keller proposes the idea of beginning as the new imagery of creation. . . . “Tehom is inscribed . . . not before the beginning, but in it.”<sup>3</sup>

This is because any beginning, every actualization of possibility, entails decision/choice and, therefore, a sense of loss. At the moment of beginning/creating/becoming in which certain possibilities are chosen, other possibilities are excluded and missed. Tehom is the depth, the difference that enfolds and unfolds those possibilities. Keller writes, “A cloud of missed possibilities envelops every beginning: it is always this beginning, this universe and not some other. The decision lacks innocence. Around its narrations gather histories of grievance: what possibilities were excluded?”<sup>4</sup> Perhaps it seems counterintuitive to conclude by speaking about a beginning, but hopefully, it is becoming clear that the processes of life are neither linear nor teleological—beginnings and endings are coextensive, co-emergent.

Admittedly, I tend to read literally, which hardly seems resonant with poetics of any kind. And yet, I am curious about the material scaffolding of the *tehom*—blasphemous thought if the scaffolding was imagined as fixed, immovable, and unchanging. However, scaffolding should be interpreted along with an idea of emergence, where structure is not the antithesis or presupposition of life but becomes a part of the fluid *tehom*. Thematic concepts such as the watery deep or “clouds of the impossible” might have a difficult time synching with architecture if architecture’s Logos remained set in stone. Fortunately, as I have been suggesting throughout this project, contemporary architects attuned to more-than-human ecologies, such as Andrés Jaque,

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<sup>3</sup> Keller, *Face of the Deep*, 52.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, 133.



provide important language for thinking and acting through theo-ecocosmopolitical constructions.

*Theopoetics-Praxis of Architecture*

I began by talking about the theopoetics of architecture as a meeting place of sorts between theology and architecture that, while not separate from, is also not equal to or a derivative of sacred architectural studies. The perceived distance has developed in relation to one another more or less intentionally over the history of the architectural profession and the scholarly development of theology over the course of the Enlightenment and continuing into modernity. According to Derrida, there is indeed a sort of philosophical split that occurred in the beginning of philosophy itself, but I would clarify that the split is not a separation—it is a relation. Philosophy, especially in its continental vein, reached for a world of ideas and architecture remained tethered to materials. However, as I tried to show in Chapter 1, the split has been a process of defining disciplines and professions in relation to each other in terms of authority and autonomy—not divorced from their influence. Theology and architecture have been practicing (*praktike*) together for quite some time to largely different ends—but for those undeniably co-created cathedrals. The pursuit of a theopoetics of architecture is the desire to make those interrelations more accountable. The motivation is to help nurture moments of exchange concerning challenges to conviviality and neighborliness that previously were held at arm's length due to disciplinary and professional demarcations.

I view this dissertation as informing my work in current discourses about equitable rights to public space, the role of the built environment in systems of access and exclusion, and the scholar's responsibility to render invisible inequities more visible. I

aim to develop critical approaches to the sociospatial systems of exclusion, dislocation, and surveillance – made operative through programs focused on “punishment” or “treatment.” I advocate for increased avenues for spatial justice, to build more dignified and respectful spaces for unsheltered people, and to connect communities with new language to advocate for sacred spaces, safe spaces, refuge cities, and sanctuaries that require critique and creativity.

My dissertation enriches my current teaching and research projects in critical design at the Boston Architectural College, where I experiment with developing methodologies for the increased visualization and transformation of geographies of inequity. The principles or goals of each project include humanizing the experiences of homelessness, highlighting the challenges of living with one another, and making the conceptual entanglement of the housed and the unhoused more visible and thereby registerable in praxis - combined with the tools of architectural and geographic visualizations. By mapping the city's invisible power relations and challenging dominant, stigmatizing narratives, this approach weaves critical theory with the representational tools and strategies inherent in the conventions of design practices.

*Poetic Rupture: Beyond Conventions of Ordering*

The process, which this dissertation works to foster, as one of disruption and advocacy, requires the identification of new modes of action and a willingness to change current practices. Designers and planners are often invited into conversations that have yet to be constructed or rearrangements that have yet to be reconfigured. Too often, critique comes after the effects of material-spatial arrangements have had time to produce significant damage. Designers spend time looking forward; critical theologies and

philosophies largely reassess events that have taken place. The two temporally positioned perspectives do not intersect in obvious ways. Theopoetics of architecture and of spatial justice offer opportunities to communicate through a shared constructive language in order to produce more nimble, experimental, and adaptive strategies for building material assemblies and community engagements that function as potential sites of justice and conviviality. The material and immaterial public sphere must be reimagined, or remembered/re-assembled, as a site of meaning-making, particularly for those who are more exposed to the harsh environment of “the public.” The public sphere is not a secular or a sacred sphere; it is becoming an event of creativity with outcomes that are more amorphous and apophatic than a binary of sacred/secular could hope to capture.<sup>5</sup> But nuanced and critical theological analysis of secularized language such as “dignified spaces,” “safe spaces,” “welcome centers,” “shelter,” and “sanctuary” can aid in reimagining material assemblies or architectural processes. The role of the built environment in systems of access and exclusion together with the scholar’s responsibility to render invisible inequities more visible, calls for more transdisciplinary tools. The critique of sociospatial systems of exclusion, dislocation, and surveillance – made operative through programs focused on “punishment” or “treatment”---benefit from siloed approaches to “solving” social problems.

A theopoetics of architecture is equipped to disrupt superficial and conventional approaches to dwelling, asking questions such as, “What are the construction

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<sup>5</sup> For James Cone, the town square was, and is, both a site of ontological meaning and often a site of violence. Public spaces, powerfully and mournfully shown in Cone’s *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, can be defined by who is allowed to exist there.

specifications, materials, and sites for building dignity?” To reach inspired answers, Julio Bermudez, in his introduction to *Transcending Architecture: Contemporary Views on Sacred Space*, argues that architecture must reach beyond the limits of measurement to embrace Le Corbusier’s “ineffable,” Rudolf Otto’s “numinous” or Louis Kahn’s “immeasurable” (Bermudez, 3). Building for more-than-human value and dignity begs a dialogue between architecture and theology. Who/what defines the conditions for human dignity and belonging to place and architecture? Do people innately have an ontological claim to the places that ground their bodies? Where the built environment concretizes cultural norms and hierarchies, theopoetics (attuned to difference) offers counternarratives to the architecture of the present order. A promise that things can be different than they are—that worldly value and worth are not unassailable cultural norms, rather they are contested by a theopoetics of holy rupture of foundationalist metaphysics, deterministic epistemologies, and authoritarian ontologies.

*Architecture’s Intervention Theopoetics of Praxis in a Specified Place and Time*

The tools of architects and spatial designers, combined with conceptual frameworks from other disciplines, help to locate, understand, and contextualize the forces at play in the city as a precursor to problem-solving. Through critical inquiry into the socio-cultural contexts that characterize the spatial narratives of Mass and Cass, for example, this work imagines its audience lies beyond the academy to include community knowledge holders, decision-makers, and collaborators. This research project explores the links between the built environment and social justice in order to reframe “the problem of homelessness” through transdisciplinary approaches to include their theological threads.

For American architect and theorist Stan Allen, the building goes beyond the local or tectonic. He describes architecture in terms of non-hierarchical fields and swarms - and as an intervening choreographer of velocities, vectors, and forces. This approach, as we witnessed especially in Chapter 4, takes the building beyond a limited context to take into account its surrounding topographies, events, and fields and proposes an architecture that materializes these fields in expressive tectonic arrays.

The permanence of time as eternity in the form of an architecture of “awe” erases architecture that foregrounds tectonic assemblages, such as weaving grasses for screens or binding bamboo for structural support. These practices are considered both primitive and temporary. Paradoxically, they relate to an “earlier time” of human development, yet they are temporary and do not last throughout history – as it is categorized and conveyed in historical surveys of architecture retaining conceptual hierarchies. This approach offers an expanded conceptualization of the relationship between sacredness, divinity, and the impossible in architecture, calling upon theopoetics to provide an alternative starting point. Architecture becomes a play of spatial affects that are responsive to forces and sensations moving between human and non-human structures. Some ecologically minded architects, planners, and designers have approached a similar *tehomie* complexity of becoming in the entangled processes of decolonial action and climate change urgencies. Architecture as a practice includes the combining, ordering, and choreographing of material assemblies and spatial experience.

*Looking toward becoming Praxis and Parallel Projects*<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Interlude Three.

My intention with this dissertation is to enrich contemporary dialogues about fair access to space, the influence of architectural design on paths of access and barriers, and the stigmatizing use of moralizing “reform” policies. I aim to highlight and develop multi-dimensional/multi-media approaches to help people communicate the multiplicity of sensory experiences that register as precarious mixtures of “feeling at home” and “being out of place.” I hope to offer a critical lens to identify and intervene in operations of dislocation, and surveillance that marks certain bodies more often than by chance. I continue to advocate for the proliferation of dignified housing without glorifying the institutions that manage resource allocation based on a set of conditions that are never absent of forms of racism, ableism, and classism. I intended to exhibit a commitment to justice-oriented positions that are often seen in binary terms: support the construction of shelters and safe spaces, and remain critical of how shelters and safe spaces are not liberating. The danger of stopping at advocating for shelters as they are currently constructed is that the wider social sentiment becomes unable to envision different futures. The result can be an acquiescence to a “it’s better than the current situation” position. The further result is that it becomes difficult for a person to complain about the resources that are offered through charity, philanthropy, or public support, and a person’s autonomy or complexity of personhood that includes preference and choice becomes erased. I advocate for increased affordable housing and also critique the policies that allow stigma to determine the location of affordable housing. I recognize the current environment surrounding Mass and Cass is not ideal and that changes in the geography of

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services may need to occur. I also do not celebrate the failure of neighbors and neighborhoods to accommodate the presence of housing differences.

My dissertation provided a crucial opportunity for deliberate reflection on my ongoing teaching and research endeavors at the Boston Architectural College. The collaborative projects I have worked on with students and colleagues have focused on moving beyond a repetitive cycle of simply “learning about homelessness” each semester or generating additional reports that reiterate the severity of the homeless crisis. My aspiration, reflected in my constructive dissertation topic, is to cultivate a deeper and sustained familiarity with the housing system's context, enabling more enduring and nuanced spatial provocations. A theopoetics of spatial justice and architecture grew out of these aspirations—utopianism and hope, theological concepts that persist and push back my personal temptations to cede to cynicism or pessimism when considering the circumstances that make it acceptable for the implementation of an inter-agency strategy to “sweep” people and their things from the place that grounds them.

While it is challenging to avoid making over-generalized statements, especially about “fields of study,” “disciplines,” or “professions” when trying to cover so much ground, I hope I have made distinctions, not separation, between the person and “their field.” People are not their institutions or disciplines. I consistently critique policymaking, but there are many people within each institutional matrix who are critical of the spaces they professionally inhabit and who are often the ones who carry an unequal amount of labor for making work environments bearable for themselves and those around them. I hope a theopoetics of spatial justice and architecture helps, in a small way, to bear the weight of it all.

## AFTERWORD

### REORIENTING NEIGHBOR:

#### FROM NEAR DWELLER TO DWELLING NEAR

The journey through questions concerning the entangled choreographies between who proximal and what orients proximities is leads to rethinking the neighbor as a spatialized concept in terms of material ecologies. “Who is my neighbor? The parable’s teaching power is in its questioning. Jesus’ answer to the lawyer’s question is not readily apparent. It is not opaque, esoteric, or abstract, but neither is it superficial. The answer may seem difficult but if one answers out of convention and repetition, the parable teaching potential becomes inert. It no longer moves you. Therefore, it does not participate in one’s becoming with the other...becomes messier with the consideration that the person needing care, in today’s street context, would potentially be moved along if they reside there too long. The neighbor is not stable, it is a matter of the circumstance that connects bodies and places. The happenstance of crossing my neighbor does not mean that our approach is arbitrary, or lacks causes or systemic influences that can be analyzed and questioned. The identification of the 'neighbor' is revealed to be a fluid construct, dependent upon the interplay of happenstance and the shared, sometimes contested, spaces we navigate. This discourse ties back to the earlier reflection on spatial dynamics, suggesting that the very architecture of our interactions is underpinned by a moral architecture.

#### **WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?**



“Kierkegaard takes the scriptural command to love our neighbour so seriously that he spends four hundred pages to highlight that command.”

–Amy Laura Hall, “Love: A Holy Caprice”

“Who, then, is one’s neighbour?” & “In what manner is one to ask the question?”

–Soren Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love*, spanning four hundred pages, is a deep meditation on just five words: “You shall love your neighbor.” True to its title, Kierkegaard devotes most of his book to dissecting the meanings of “works” and “love.” Kierkegaard underscores the uniqueness of “Christian love,” contrasting it with “poetic love,” and he differentiates between “works of love” and “sentiments of love.” A notable reason for his extensive examination of “the neighbor” in *Works of Love* is his reaction to Danish Romanticism. However, in the initial hundred pages, he dedicates sections to each of the other three words of the command: “you,” “shall,” and “neighbor.” By centering on each term, he seeks a deeper comprehension of the five-word phrase. In this chapter, my focus is on “neighbor” – not to detach it from “love,” but to afford it the room necessary for further reflection.

For Kierkegaard, the term is explicitly derived from “neahgebur” (near-dweller), meaning your neighbor is “he who dwells nearer than anyone else.” Kierkegaard cautions against interpreting “nearest to me” in the context of filial, fraternal, or communal relationships or affinities. The concept is more about proximity to another person.

[Y]et not in the sense of partiality, for to love him [sic] who through favouritism is nearer to you than all others is self-love. . . Your neighbour, then, is nearer to you than all others. But is he also nearer to you than you are to yourself? No, that he is not, but he is just as near or ought to be just as near to you as you are to yourself.

While Kierkegaard conceptualizes the “neighbor” as a “near-dweller,” he defines “near” in relation to “who” the neighbor is, using terms like self and other. “Neighbour is what

philosophers would call the other,” Kierkegaard asserted in *Works of Love*, and “the other” continued to be a way of framing the neighbor question in theology and philosophy. He elaborated, “To be sure, neighbour in itself is manifold, for neighbour means all men; and yet in another sense one person is enough in order that you may practise the law.”<sup>1</sup> Does Kierkegaard diminish the significance of proximity by universalizing neighbour status when he writes, “He is your neighbour on the basis of equality with you before God; but this equality absolutely every man has, and he has it absolutely”?<sup>2</sup> Kierkegaard posits a neighbor is *one* and *everyone*. At first glance, this seems too vague to guide political and ethical actions, which is a point of contention in Adorno's critique of *Works of Love*. Instead, he is emphasizing the perspective from which one should approach the question, “Who is my neighbor?”<sup>3</sup>

For Kierkegaard, equality does not imply that one individual is readily substitutable for another. Rather, equality, as understood by Kierkegaard, should be contextualized within his Christian hermeneutics: all are equal before God. When he speaks of everyone being your neighbor, he is establishing that the act of loving your neighbor cannot rely on preference or feelings of romantic love. Locating your neighbor

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<sup>1</sup> Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 37

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* 72

<sup>3</sup> I am not attempting to “rescue” Kierkegaard reading, but rather, attempt to enter into a conversation about who or what the neighbor is not necessarily apolitical or apolitical. His sustained reflection offers a number of entry points, although we will likely arrive a different destination, I find his extended reflection on neighbor-love to be a helpful departure point. See Darren Edward Surman’s dissertation titled “Love’s Praxis: The Political in Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love*,” (2012)

is difficult *if* you do not recognize your responsibility.<sup>4</sup> In his words, “Choosing a lover, finding a friend, yes, that is a long, hard job, but one’s neighbour is easy to recognise, easy to find—if one himself will only recognize his duty...by recognising your duty you easily discover who your neighbour is.”<sup>5</sup>

## ENCOUNTERING THE NEXT-ONE

Later in *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard interprets the neighbor slightly differently as the “next-one,” the first person you pass; therefore anyone, he argues, can potentially be – in fact is – my neighbor, reestablishing proximity, “for when you open the door which you shut in order to pray to God, the first person you meet as you go out is your neighbour whom you *shall* love.”<sup>6</sup> By translating neighbor as the next one you pass, Kierkegaard hints at the encounter is contingent on events of arrival and departure. If the neighbor is the “next-one” on the other side of the door, how might the architecture participate in the next one I come by? How does that translate physically and contextually? How much of my encounters with the “next-one” I come by are baked into my position (political, social, and cultural position) and my location (physical dimensional location)?

## DECONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES

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<sup>4</sup> Kierkegaard uses the word duty which demonstrates his reliance on Kant’s philosophy. In this chapter, I suggest responsibility to connect it to the discourse on hospitality and welcome which is in conversation with the work of Levinas and Derrida.

<sup>5</sup> Duty as responsibility. See Ellen Armour’s essay “Responsi/ability” in *Living Together*.

<sup>6</sup> Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 64.

In *Cosmopolitan Theology: Reconstituting Planetary Hospitality, Neighbor-Love, and Solidarity in an Uneven World*, Namsoon Kang offers a rich reconceptualization of *cosmopolitanism* offering a new way to envision our identities in relation to neighbor-love as unconditional hospitality from a feminist postcolonial perspective.<sup>7</sup> Kang argues for cultivating a cosmopolitan identity that transcends we-they binaries defined along identitarian and ideological lines while simultaneously recognizing our need for connections to local communities. Cosmopolitan theology becomes a transboundary, transidentity, transreligious discourse that deconstructs exclusionary neighbor constructions. She argues for resisting categorical constructions produced by hegemonic totalizations that classify individuals into a stereotypical box of numbers and data.<sup>8</sup> Cosmopolitan theological discourse “dreams a world where all singular persons...enjoy the cosmic conviviality as fellow-citizens-of-the-cosmos.” The value of cosmopolitan theological discourse is determined by “what kind of *practices* it motivates,” what mode of welcoming *the guest, the new arrivant*, it inspires.”<sup>9</sup>

Kang’s notion of cosmopolitan theology relies on ethical and political language. Although *Cosmopolitan Theology*<sup>10</sup> reflects a robust conception of politics and ethics – inspired by Derridean *hospitality* and Kantian *cosmopolitanism*, the framework is

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<sup>7</sup> Namsoon Kang, *Cosmopolitan Theology*, 1.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 189.

<sup>10</sup> Kang, 20. *Cosmopolitan Theology* gives glimpses of cosmopolitanism with cosmos<sup>#</sup> through its language, but Kang’s gaze is directed toward human-human interrelationality, subjectivity and freedom. Cosmopolitanism carries the kernel of the cosmos with it from Diogenes the Cynic and Seneca ... *kosmopolites*. ... “Cosmopolitanism is about planetary conviviality.”

articulated in terms of identity, nationality, rights, justice, equality, democracy, law, subjects, citizenship, human will and intentionality. Kang's cosmopolitanism, read through her unique combination of feminist, postcolonial, diasporic and deconstructive lenses which emphasizes "*politics of transidentity*," challenges "conventional notions of exclusive belonging, *identity*, and *citizenship*."<sup>11</sup>

### WHO/WHERE IS THE SAMARITAN?

The Samaritan is the neighbor, demolishing the boundaries of inclusion-exclusion. Often read as a complete outsider, some interpreters read the parable of the Good Samaritan as a critical commentary on insider-outsider dynamics. Michael Fagenblat, in *A Covenant of Creatures*, says, "By illustrating the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself by way of the Samaritan, the parable, in this reading, is said to teach that there is no longer insider or outsider, friend or enemy, Jew or Samaritan, for all are one." Fagenblat offers another interpretation. Samaritans could be considered "insider aliens." He concludes, a more appropriate interpretation reads the parable not as "breaking down of identities but the excess of the law of love over political sectarianism..." Fagenblat says this better represents Levinas' understanding of neighbor-love.

Derrida, in *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, shares Levinas' description of death in *Death and Time*: "Death is often defined – the death that "we meet" "in the face of the Other" – as non-response; "It is the without-response," [Levinas] says. And elsewhere: "There is here an end that always has the ambiguity of a departure without return, of a

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 17.

passing away but also of a scandal ('is it really possible that he is dead?') of non-response and of my responsibility."

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, "A man [sic] was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of a robber, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead."<sup>12</sup> Half dead is a state of suspension (superposition) in the liminal space between life and death, between response and non-response. An interaction occurs in which the neighbor is an event, rather than an identity. The neighbor position relies on a response that presumes some element of nearness.

Beginning and ending with *the identity* of the Samaritan deemphasizes that the Samaritan was not the neighbor as a Samaritan; the Samaritan was the neighbor in response. The Samaritan became a neighbor in an unrepeatable event. Does the identity marker Levite and priest prevent each from being a neighbor? No, in some ways they are more of a neighbor than the Samaritan if one accepts identity and communal affiliation as the measure of a neighbor. Being a Samaritan does not presume to become a neighbor? Keeping the Samaritan identity at the center of reflection fails to open up the fullness of the parable. Being neighbor required not only a particular gaze, or an orientation, but required an act specific to the particularity of the moment — an ethical response that neither an abstract belief such as love for all, nor a universal proclamation, such as universal human rights alone can enact.

He towards whom I have a duty I am neighbor, and when I fulfill my duty I prove that I am a neighbor. Christ does not speak about recognizing one's neighbor but about being a neighbor oneself, about proving oneself to be a neighbor, something the Samaritan showed by his [sic] compassion. By this he did not prove that the

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<sup>12</sup> (Lk 10:30)

assaulted man was his neighbour but that he was as neighbour of the one assaulted.<sup>13</sup>

Kang's critique of identity politics and its influence on the practice of neighbor-love carries an important spatial dimension as well.

## NAMSOON KANG & BORDER-CROSSING

Kang's *cosmopolitan theology*<sup>14</sup> adds crucial perspectives and theories with important understandings of the meaning of place. She writes about neighbor-love from a feminist postcolonial perspective and engages deeply with philosophers she refers to as "diasporic thinkers" to critique geographical, epistemological, and ontological boundaries. Border crossing and radical hospitality are important elements in her constructive project.<sup>15</sup> She connects neighbor identity and neighbor-love to the politics of internal dislocation with an external dislocation. Reflecting on her experiences of living, working, and traveling in different locations, she notes how often the moment of an encounter opens with the question, "Where are you from?" Depending on the context, "who" asks the questions marks "to whom" the question is being asked as "out-of-place" Who becomes is a matter of orientation, locationality, and positionality.<sup>16</sup> She asks questions

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<sup>13</sup> Kang, *Cosmopolitan Theology*.

<sup>14</sup> Kang provides a philosophical history of the term cosmopolitan and uses "'cosmopolitan,' to denote 'citizen of the cosmos.' . . . Diogenes the Cynic replied, 'I am a citizen of the world/I am kosmopolites.'" (*Cosmopolitan Theology*, 261). She adds, "An identity as kosmopolites obviously transcends a specific national boundary, and thereby moves beyond a community-bounded identity." (*C. T.*, 261)

<sup>15</sup> She continued it in *Diasporic Feminist Theology* and earlier discussed in articles such as, "Out of Places: Asian Feminist Theology of Dislocation." (107,2011).

<sup>16</sup> Kang, "Out of Places," 109.

about what it means to be “out of place,””<sup>17</sup> being dislocated from the point of departure?”<sup>18</sup> Kang does not dismiss identity itself, but the politics of representation and power structures embedded in forms of identitarianism and identity politics. Namssoon Kang argues alongside diasporic thinkers who refuse to fully resolve the encounter as if it can be approached by universalizing ethics. Kang reads love your neighbor along with Jacques Derrida’s conceptualization of hospitality – welcoming the stranger. Emmanuel Levinas’ “ethics as first philosophy” with a throughline of the welcome to Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction of hospitality.

Poeticization of hospitality can offer an imaginative power to expand the horizon of hospitality. However, there is danger in having a romanticized attitude toward hospitality, because, in the course of romanticization, that very hospitality becomes depoliticized, apoliticized and anti-politicized—when, meanwhile, the hospitality in human day-to-day reality requires a politically impossible and ethically unconditional boundary-crossing such as one can experience, for example, among undocumented immigrants.<sup>19</sup>

Transitioning from understanding the “neighbor” as a positional subjectivity to conceiving of it more as an encounter—beyond mere identity or a characteristic not inherent to either party but as *relata*—does not denote an effacement of subjectivity on my part. Rather, it underscores elements often overlooked or understated in conventional discourse.

### **THE FACE-TO-FACE ENCOUNTER:**

*Totalizing systems work to reduce the other to the same.*

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, 110.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 109. See Kang, “Who/What is Asian?”

<sup>19</sup> Kang, *Cosmopolitan Theology*, 174, 112.



“This book will present subjectivity as welcoming the Other, as hospitality; in it the idea of infinity is consummated.”<sup>20</sup>

Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*

“[T]he problems implicit in discourses such as ‘stranger danger’ – where it is assumed that being a stranger is a matter of inhabiting a certain body – are not resolved by simply welcoming ‘the stranger’.”

–Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*<sup>21</sup>

Levinas begins *Totality and Infinity* with a description of war as a totalizing system that neither permits nor acknowledges the unique and incomparable singularity of the other. War negates both infinity and alterity. “War is fixed in the concept of totality.” He further writes, “War does not manifest exteriority and the other as other; it destroys the identity of the same.”<sup>22</sup> Within such a totalizing framework—using war as a paradigm—individuals are subordinated to the system’s objectives. Their significance is ascertained strictly within this encompassing system, refuting any acknowledgment beyond this totality. Individuals are defined through abstract tertiary terms thereby assimilating the “other” into the realm of the “same.” A mechanism employed to control, dominate, dehumanize, and eradicate.

For Levinas, welcoming the face of the other in the face-to-face event—the locus of *infinition*—binds the two “greatest commandments”: love of God and love of neighbor. The latter often appears to be construed as subordinate to the former. Thus, the edict to “love your neighbor as yourself” is frequently perceived as secondary or distinct

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<sup>20</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 4

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

from the act of loving God. Levinas challenges this hierarchical presupposition. While his formulation suggests an inversion of this structure, he posits they converge in the “Infinite,” in welcoming the other. Thus, Levinas’ claims, against Heideggarian privileging of ontology, ethics as *first* philosophy).<sup>23</sup> Through this, Levinas blurs the perceptual demarcation separating the two commandments.

One of the critiques of Levinas’ structure of the welcome is that its inherently passive modality of receptivity. The welcome cannot be conjured or constructed any more than the face can be. The mechanics of this interaction remain ambiguous once we come face-to-face with the “other.” While Levinas’ viewpoint provides a valuable counter-narrative to excessively conditioned and regulated forms of interaction, the risk of surviving welcoming is not universally shared. This approaches the limit of conceptualizing the encounter at which juncture the politics of such an encounter introduce further intricacies and become complicated.<sup>24</sup> Derrida often employs “welcome” and “hospitality” interchangeably. Levinas tends to favor ‘welcoming’ over ‘hospitality’, even though Derrida draws connections between the two concepts and Derrida favors hospitality.<sup>25</sup> Derrida notes, “Although the word is neither frequently used

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<sup>23</sup> Levinas uses the phrase “Of God who comes to mind” as the experience of the Infinite in the face-to-face encounter. Ethics is not a second order function. Ethics, my relation to the other, is a locus for God’s presence and revelation. The face is the locus for experiencing Infinity. Infinity is never fully present although it is also not absent. Responsibility welcomes Infinity.

<sup>24</sup> A discussion of Keller’s discussion of “complication” follows this section.

<sup>25</sup> Derrida, *Of Hospitality*,

nor emphasized within it, *Totality and Infinity* bequeaths to us an immense treatise of hospitality.”<sup>26</sup>

### CATHERINE KELLER ON LEVINAS

“Relation is appearing as tie or fiber in a network whose edges fade not into a void but unknowability.”<sup>27</sup>

Catherine Keller, *The Cloud of the Impossible*

Levinas contends, “It is in another that I always see the widow and the orphan. The other always comes first.”. He characterizes subjectivity as emerging within the ethical event. Yet his concept of becoming is not synonymous with theopoetic the theopoetic understanding of the term.<sup>28</sup> Engaging with Catherine Keller’s theopoetics of becoming provides pivotal nuances that challenge conventional identifications of the other, the stranger, the guest, or the host as seen in discourses on welcoming or extending hospitality. Drawing from Cusa’s use of the term *complicatio*, which denotes “folding together,” Keller integrates this notion—“the *pli*, will be *plied*”—into her theopoetics of apophatic entanglement as presented in *The Cloud of the Impossible*.<sup>29</sup> Keller asks, “What if relation itself does not, cannot ever altogether, exclude or enclose but *enfolds*? And, *unfolds its relata altered*? The other comes before us then in the alterity not of a discrete over-against, not in the bounded exteriority of some flat face-to-face, but as *altering and*

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<sup>26</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, 228

<sup>28</sup> 216. Feminist process theopoetics that I am following, specifically a theopoetics of apophatic entanglement (“the tie that binds”) Catherine Keller puts forward, disrupts tendencies toward pure separation of elements. (35)

<sup>29</sup> Keller identifies this notion surfacing in Deleuze’s *The Fold*. She expands it much further.

*as altered in the act of relation.* For alterity is *relation in action* and so in alteration.”<sup>30</sup>

(emphasis added) Keller unfolds Levinas’ guest-other language into a field of multiplicities of relation.<sup>31</sup>

The failure of responsiveness during the Holocaust was never far from Levinas’ commitment, not in a general notion of shared humanity, but in direct action to the singularities treated as a mass of indistinguishable faceless objects. Theopoetics does not set singularity against multiplicity. Singularity offers an aspect of uniqueness we experience. We are indeed different, but not in our atomization; Keller would argue we’re not unique as in a discrete alongside other multiples, but humans and nonhumans are unique multiplicities of relations, unique processes of becoming, each composed of “nonseparable differences”<sup>32</sup>

Keller’s theopoetic “cloud perspective,” “locates each face, with its own point of view, within the penumbra of its planetary sociality. The face of the neighbor, the beggar, the stranger may at any moment ethically stand forth. But the crowd of others do not therefore become void of ethical significance.”<sup>33</sup> Planetary sociality puts the theoethical command to love the neighbor with unconditional hospitality in a matrix of relations, where every action ripples and the possible actions are influenced by its connections.

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<sup>30</sup> Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 22.

<sup>31</sup> Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 216. The other as “widow, orphan, orphan, or stranger hides the tangled relations of multiplicity that make up the guest, host, and the gaps in between. But, Keller asks, “Is all such talk of multiplicities still another way of avoiding commitment? These far-flung rhizomes of grass, nomads, atoms, and orbs may escape not only knowability but also responsibility.”

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, 217. Further conversation includes responses to Keller’s commentary on Levinas: “I am composed and so in part degraded in and by my relations.” (Keller, *Cloud*, 217) “The question of ethics is always a question of an ethical *relation*.” (Keller, *Cloud*, 217).

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, 217

When we contemplate the profound expanse of our being, stemming from an unending web of relations—this inexhaustible “expansion unfolding of a singular self,” an “immeasurable immensity” only encompassed by the infinite—how is it that such magnitude is seemingly “confined” within a limited space such as a corridor or a room? This experience is among the central inquiries that a theopoetics of architecture seeks to grapple with. The outcome of the ethical event remains uncertain. The juxtaposition of the boundless potential of infinity with the confounding limits of our internal pathways cultivates a milieu conducive to ethical deliberation.

If we consider the ties or fibers within a network as a pathway in a fluctuating manifold, along which connectivity travels, the manifold’s topology influences the path of movement. This influences its trajectory and the probability of particular reactions in new relational moments—tangles of fibers, entwinement of vectors, should they possess direction and momentum—within a tensor field. While mapping these pathways offers some insight, the resultant data, though not arbitrary or rooted in sheer randomness, remains uncertain. Conceiving our bodies as interconnected sets of relations interacting with other entities with their own unique sets of relations, by which we emerge, our movements, paths, angles of arrival, and lines of flight inform the collisions of novel connections. The geometry or typology of that manifold would provide us with some information, however, focusing solely on the shape of the whole leaves us with the form. The connections themselves are intimate points of contact, expressing the moments of connection that participate in the overall structure. Both the form’s architecture and the tectonics of the linkages provide clues about our relations and their probabilities or possibilities.

Our relations are uncertain – ontologically, empirically, tectonically. Who we are, what we are near, how we observe and how we connect are full of uncertainties; complicated by the pasts we inherit, the atmospheres we step into, and paths of departure and arrival. Keller’s captures poetic-process here reconfirms the uncertainty in our becomings and arrivals, “We—we humans at least—emerge complicated by a past that we cannot fully know, implicated in its distortions, its pathologies intimate and collective.”<sup>34</sup>

Keller’s approach to relational ethics, which remains open to infinite and unknowable possibilities sets the stage, paradoxically, for a discussion of walled experiences. Our bonds are binding, but bonds are also strengthening. The articulation at a joint, be, skeletal or architectural, is a site of friction, but with friction also comes the possibility of movement. It cannot be said to be a “good” or “right” condition. It depends; it is interdependent. Keller explains, “Our relations deliver also an ability to respond, to be moved and so to move otherwise than before. But this *interdependent* ability to respond remains ever *undependable*.”<sup>35</sup> This undependability is a consequence of its inherent unknowability. Yet, the unknowable, uncertain, and indeterminate do not deter possibility.

Can we find hope in the midst of articulations, does the freedom of movement and uncertainty that Keller associates with the *tehom* and the cloud have significance in less fluid or gaseous states, for example, in the rooms bodies inhabit and corridors through which they move? Keller’s insistence on immanence opens “into an uncertainty at the

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<sup>34</sup> Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 229.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, 229.

heart of things need not then dishearten decision. Even when internal contradictions threaten our surest impulses, some other possibility, hinting at wider relations, may already be implicated. “Process,” writes Whitehead, “is the immanence of the infinite in the finite.”<sup>36</sup> How does this process proceed in concrete (or wood, plaster, glass, stone, stucco, woven grass, textiles, clay, mycelial bricks, etc.) structures?

## CONCLUSION

What constitutes neighbor-ing if we do not limit our questions to *who*—subject/object dialectics? Ultimately, one cannot claim the label neighbor as an identity marker, nor does one become a neighbor simply by naming them such. Neighbor is a process, an event that requires intentionality, a beginning. Loving your neighbor begins before the encounter event with the neighbor. The image of “the other” is constructed by discourses that alter human singularity beyond recognition resulting in prescriptions of “love” based on a disfigured description of “the neighbor.” A surprise encounter is not necessarily an arbitrary encounter. Therefore “Let us adopt a naïve attitude towards it,” as Freud proposed, “as though we were hearing it for the first time; we shall be unable then to suppress a feeling of surprise and bewilderment.”<sup>37</sup> Doing so is necessary if we are to resist decontextualizing neighbor-love.

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<sup>36</sup> Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 231.

<sup>37</sup> Editors quoting Freud in *Political Theology of the Neighbor*, 1.

## CONTENT NOTES

### PREFACE CONTENT NOTES

Fn.5. “MSW Graduates by Race and Ethnicity: Findings from the 2018 Survey of Masters of Social Work Graduates,” *George Washington University Health Workforce Institute*. September 2019., 4-7. [https://www.cswe.org/getmedia/938fe746-53c2-47ff-85d6-086df54821c4/WorkforceStudy\\_Brief-MSW\\_Raceethnicity-pdf.pdf](https://www.cswe.org/getmedia/938fe746-53c2-47ff-85d6-086df54821c4/WorkforceStudy_Brief-MSW_Raceethnicity-pdf.pdf). Also see, Melody Loya, “Racial Attitudes in White Social Workers: Implications for Culturally Sensitive Practice,” *PB&J: Politics, Bureaucracy, and Justice* vol. 3 no. 1.

More than 88% of MSC graduates were female. Graduates were predominantly female and heterosexual across all racial and ethnic groups. The largest racial and ethnic group was White Non-Hispanic (57%), followed by Black/African American Non-Hispanic (21%), Hispanic (14%), and Other Non-Hispanic5 (7%), which includes Asian and Pacific Islander (5%). According to a joint study by the Center for Health Workforce Studies and the NASW Center for Workforce Studies (2006), about 85% of licensed social workers are White non-Hispanics, but only 68% of the general population is White non-Hispanic. Approximately 7% of social workers surveyed were Black/African American, and 4% were Hispanic/Latino. Just 1% of the respondents self-identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, and about 1% identified as Native American/Alaskan.

fn. 8. Also see, “Listening to Black Women and Girls: Lived Experiences of Adulthood Bias,” *Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality*, May 15, 2019. <https://www.aecf.org/resources/listening-to-black-women-and-girls#:~:text=Adulthood%20bias,quantitative%20ramifications%20of%20adulthood%20bias>

fn. 17. Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, Verso, 1989), 2.

Critical geographers, like Edward Soja, Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, and Doreen Massey ground their spatial concerns in material histories, and I apply a similar approach to architecture, at a different scale. The following statement by Edward Soja applies here: “What one sees when one looks at geographies is stubbornly simultaneous, but language dictates a sequential succession, a linear flow of sentential statements bound by the most spatial and earthly constraints, the impossibility of two objects (or words) occupying the same precise place.”

Edward Soja writes: The ‘illusion of opaqueness’ reifies space, inducing a myopia that sees only a superficial materiality, concretized forms susceptible to little else but measures and phenomenal description: fixed, dead, and undialectical: the Cartesian geography of spatial science. Alternatively, the ‘illusion of transparency’ dematerializes space into pure ideation and representation, an intuitive way of thinking that equally prevents us from seeing the social construction of affective geographies, the concretization of social relations embedded in spatiality, an interpretation of space as a ‘concrete abstraction’, a social hieroglyphic similar to Marx’s conceptualization of the commodity form. Philosophers and geographers have tended to bounce back and forth between these two distorting illusions for centuries, dualistically obstructing from view the power-filled and problematic making of geographies, the enveloping and instrumental spatialization of society. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 7. Soja continues, “Space in itself may be primordially given, but the organization, and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation, and experience.” Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 80. And Soja quoting Lefebvre adds, “Space and the political organization of space express social relationships but also react back upon them.” Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 81.



fn. 22. Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 2.

For example: Individuals experiencing homelessness are estimated to have life expectancies 17.5 – 25 years shorter than housed individuals. The life expectancy for an individual experiencing homelessness is estimated to be between 48–52 years old. Healthcare for the Homeless, <https://www.hchmd.org/homelessness-makes-you-sick>. Non-elderly people who have experienced homelessness face 3.5 times higher mortality risk than people who are housed, accounting for differences in demographic characteristics and geography. Importantly, homelessness is associated with 60 percent greater mortality risk than poverty alone. Based on BFI Working Paper 2023-41, “The Mortality of the US Homeless Population,” by Iliana Logani, University of Chicago; Bruce D. Meyer, University of Chicago; and Angela Wyse, University of Chicago, March 2023. <https://bfi.uchicago.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/The-Mortality-of-the-US-Homeless-Population.pdf>

fn. 23. “Theopoetics names how the divine (theos) manifests itself as making (poi-esis),” Kearney states. Kearney, “My Way to Theopoetics through Eriugena,” *Literature & Theology*, Vol. 33. No. 3. September 2019, pp. 233 – 240. doi:10.1093/litthe/frz019

fn. 24. The points, lines, and bona fide boundaries we typically conceive of as making space legible are much more fragile, fluid, and violent than mapping typically conveys. Attempts to understand the philosophical and theological reference points for how built environments are imagined and constructed can help us offer answers about who has “rights to the city” – a phrase popularized by spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre, and who has, as Hannah Arendt posits in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, the “right to have rights.”

fn. 33. Nels Anderson, *Hobo*, xxiii. Anderson writes, “The man whose restless disposition made him a pioneer on the frontier tends to become a ‘homeless man’ —a hobo and a vagrant—in the modern city. From the point of view of their biological predispositions, the pioneer and the hobo are perhaps the same temperamental type; from the point of view of their socially acquired traits, they are something quite different.”

fn. 35. For example, the language used in the 1996 U. S. Welfare Act or The 1996 “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act.” In her book, *Disruptive Ethics*,

Traci West discusses moral claims made by public officials about poor women specifically during the welfare reform debates of the 1990s. “The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act,” was the product of this reform debate. Reflected in the naming of the act, the speech and language concerning these government-established public practices express presuppositions that poverty is a result of irresponsibility. To help “them” give up their irresponsible ways, recipients in several states must sign a “Personal Responsibility Agreement Plan” to receive help. The policy demands moral reform of recipients that focuses on parenting, sexual practices, work ethic and family structure. The expression of moral priorities involves multiple public arenas in which speaking subjects (politician, media members, public leaders and self) speak for and about spoken objects (the poor, the homeless, the other). This process reflects Said’s observation about the objectivization process produced through discourse. Said wrote, “...because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action.” In the discourse, populations become homogeneously labeled as failing to live up to their moral responsibilities, while ignoring the real lived experiences of multivalent systemic forms of oppression and disenfranchisement that cause poverty, see Traci C West, *Disruptive Christian Ethics : When Racism and Women’s Lives Matter* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

See also Traci West, “Agenda for the Churches: Uprooting a National Policy of Morally Stigmatizing Poor Single Black Moms,” in Elizabeth Bounds, ed., *Welfare Policy: Feminist Critiques*, Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, Ohio, 1999, 137.

West finds that the public discourse serves to further victimize poor women. Women who are eligible for welfare assistance are presumed to be bad parents, “They can never be seen as innocent mothers struggling to care for their children, since they are believed to be guilty of immorality the moment that they are born poor and black.” Based on such conclusions, the government established public practices seeking to teach poor women “middle class values.” “‘We,’ the good people, presumably the middle-class people, who are repeatedly juxtaposed to the ‘welfare mothers,’ can try to teach them better values by saying ‘no’ to them...Therefore, it is taken for granted that the rights and privileges of ‘our’ superiority to ‘welfare mothers’ include exerting control over them. ‘We’ have the right and even the responsibility to tell them how to behave.” West continues, “The rules presume the government’s right to play an aggressive, intrusive role in correcting these supposed deficiencies.” (*Welfare Policy*, 137). The discursive production of the other becomes the basis for political action for “helping” and “dealing with” the other, for example people experiencing homelessness. Public discourse that describes people suffering from poverty as irresponsible, oversexualized, and as having a predisposition toward crime will shape the way we imagine and therefore love our neighbor.

fn. 44. Also see, Melanie Loehwing, *Homeless Advocacy and the Rhetorical Construction of the Civic Home* (Pennsylvania University Press, 2018). See also, Russell K. Schutt with Stephen M. Goldfinger, *Homelessness, Housing, and Mental Illness* (Harvard University Press, 2011). See also, Jeff Ferrell, *Drift: Illicit Mobility and Uncertain Knowledge* (University of California Press, 2018). For a lengthier discussion about decolonizing social work vocabulary see: “Decolonizing Social Work Vocabulary” in *Disrupting Whiteness in Social Work*, edited by Sonia Tascon and Jim Ife, 185.

fn. 48. *Sanctum, sanctus* (root *sancire*), *santio*, (*sanctus* > *sanctuarium*). Sacred also comes from another branch of *sancier*, *sacer*. “Sanctum has one of the simplest origins: it comes from Latin *sanctus*, meaning “holy”, a conjugation of the root *sancire*, “to consecrate” (declaring something holy), which in turn derives from the Proto-Indo-European root *sehk*, with the same definition”. *The Etymology Nerd*. <https://www.etymologynerd.com/blog/sanctioning-sacred-saintly-sanctums> Accessed March 1, 2022. In my dissertation I will include another route of the root of sacred space from Hebrew meaning of a dwelling and protective space as it is detailed in Keller’s *Cloud of the Impossible*: “Shekhinah (from *shakan*, to dwell), the “Indwelling Presence,” of God: *anan shekhinah* , “the cloud of the presence.” And “the dominant characteristic of the clouds of glory,” we read, is not terror, not secrecy, not incomprehensibility, but “protection.” 5 In the dense metonymy of ancient rabbinic writing, the mercy of shade in a desert assimilates the cloud to a “tabernacle” or “booth” (*sukkah*, pl. *sukkot* ) in the Second Temple period, where the clouds morph into “a force field that surrounds the camps.”

fn. 49. Queer theological approaches to survival and resistance look beyond language and text to find meaning within and against an inhospitable logocentric environment - demonstrated by Laurel Schneider’s thinking with Gerald Vizenor’s notion of *survivance* in “More Than a Feeling: A Queer Notion of Survivance” and Mark Jordan’s provocative insistence that queer theology has yet to be written in “In Search of Queer Theology Lost.” Schneider reminds us, “Queer theory in the realm of religion is theory come back to its origins in Christianity, to its antinormative battles” (Schneider, 260). The long fought antinormative battles in Christianity that rip and suture the body are contested at the intersection of medicine, public health, and religion.

## INTRODUCTION CHAPTER ONE CONTENT NOTES

fn. 2. The architectural lens through which this inquiry is conducted is deliberate, emphasizing the discipline’s role as a critical nexus where theoretical, theological, and philosophical discussions intersect with concrete, spatial decisions. This focus on architecture as a pivotal point of intervention sets the stage for Vranken’s discourse in *Between the Social and the*

*Spatial*, where the conversation expands to encompass the multifaceted nature of poverty, bridging the gap between the social conditions and the spatial manifestations of exclusion.

fn. 4. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 252.

“The purpose in making a convict (someone who has broken the law) into a “delinquent” (a law-breaker that can be “reformed”) is that it allows prison officials to investigate the individual’s biography to see where they went wrong, and by investigating the individual’s background, it is possible to create a “animal classification” of social types and a criminal “milieu.” Investigate the delinquent and you can judge social backgrounds. Implicitly the target of “reform” is the social class, i.e. the restive laboring class (the “dangerous classes”).”

The identification of proper architecture eliminates everything that is considered to be outside of architecture. However, architecture participates in its outside and in-between spaces. The negative space becomes less articulable or actionable from the site of “disciplines” when it’s not considered part of a structure or predetermined order, despite the political perception of disorderliness on the part of bodies that inhabit architecture without. Rather than reading the crevices, caverns, and spaces around and between buildings as separate from architecture, we should look for the connections and relations between multiple understandings of architecture and the “negative spaces” ordering systems also create.

Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside*, MIT Press, 2001.

In *Architecture from the Outside*, Elizabeth Grosz opens her acknowledgments by stating, “I am an outsider to the field of architecture.” Her statement is one of gratitude to her interlocutors but also sets up her exploration of the benefits of critiquing architecture from the outside. To be within architecture, she suggests, would be to accept the relationship of the field to the body. See also, Grosz, “Embodying Space: An Interview” conducted by Kim Armitage and Paul Dash where Grosz comments, “But in a sense,” definitions of architecture that assume the social function of its projects, also “elide a feeling of responsibility, because architecture can claim to be already dealing with the body.” Grosz clarifies, “To merely say that there is a body is not yet to deal with it. Bodies are there in a way that architects do not want, or cannot afford, to recognize. But the body is there in an incontrovertible way. The point is to affirm that it’s there, and to find the right kind of terms and values by which to make it profitable for architecture to think its own in investments in corporeality.” (Grosz, *A O*, 13).

I share many of Grosz’s views about the benefit of having an outsider perspective, but in spaces where the decisions about how the environment will be shaped and for whose benefit, adopting a strict outsider position, disciplinarily but also epistemologically, to architecture can limit pursuits of social and spatial justice. The architecture profession, traditionally, benefits from limiting access to knowledge. The autonomy of architecture relies on articulating specializations and expert skills and knowledge. Historically, there is a risk, or fear due to the perception of risk, that professional design services will no longer be needed. Grosz’s collection of essays includes a representative architecture expert who enjoys disciplinary dialogue but is committed to identifying what lies inside or outside architecture. Architect and theorist Peter Eisenman writes in the foreword, “This book is, in part, an exploration of how two disciplines and enterprises that are fundamentally outside of each other—architecture and philosophy—require a third space in which to interact without hierarchy, a space or position outside both, a space that does not yet exist.” In his foreword, Eisenman asserts, “When Grosz wanders closest to architecture and away from the security of philosophy is when she becomes most interesting and at the same time most problematic. . . but it is clearly coming from philosophy, not architecture, because the reader has to fill in his or her own specific references to current architectural thought on the subject.” (Eisenman, *A O*, xii).

fn. 19. Frampton, “Reflections on the Autonomy of Architecture,” 17. Kenneth Frampton wrote, “Few architects care to remind themselves that only 20 percent of the total built output in

developed societies is subject to the advice of the profession, so that the greater part of the man-made [sic] environment escapes our creative intervention. This disturbing fact means that we have to acknowledge the limited domain in which we are asked to operate, and in so doing we should recognize that there is a world of difference between architecture as critical act and building as a banal, almost metabolic activity.”

Heidegger became a pivotal figure among several widely read architectural historians and theorists of the 21st century—Frampton, for one. But a figure more widely referenced in conversations surrounding religion and architecture is Christian Norberg-Schultz, a historian and theorist who is a key figure in the scholarship on architectural phenomenology.

fn. 21. Callid Keefe-Perry, *Way to Water* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014). Keefe-Perry writes, “In fact, that the process method seems so divergent provides for an interesting opportunity through contrast: while the methods and articulated goals are markedly different than the biblical and literary focuses of the early theopoetic authors, I believe that there are some underlying claims that unite even the most systematic of process thinkers with someone like Alves who has all but abandoned sustained argumentation,” (Keefe-Perry, 70). He continues, “That these resonances exist between process theology and the literary tradition of Wilder’s theopoetics without sharing a single citation is interesting indeed, suggesting that there is something more in common than a mere word.” (Keefe-Perry, 76-77).

fn. 22. Keefe-Perry attempts to describe the development of theopoetics in a sequential fashion. Keller’s account provides a more rhizomatic picture. “In fact, that the process method seems so divergent provides for an interesting opportunity through contrast: while the methods and articulated goals are markedly different than the biblical and literary focuses of the early theopoetic authors, I believe that there are some underlying claims that unite even the most systematic of process thinkers with someone like Alves who has all but abandoned sustained argumentation.” (Keefe-Perry, 70). “That these resonances exist between process theology and the literary tradition of Wilder’s theopoetics without sharing a single citation is interesting indeed, suggesting that there is something more in common than a mere word.” (76-77).

p. 48. The 1960s is a unique scholarly period in the history of the term. In many cases, the scholars using the word are acknowledging many of the issues raised surrounding the “Death of God” movement. “While the first published mention of ‘theopoetics’ as such is in Stanley Hopper’s 1971 American Academy of Religion address “The Literary Imagination and the Doing of Theology,” the phrase did not spring forth from nothing.” (Hopper, 17).

Stanley Hopper and, later, Amos Wilder wrote about theopoetics in the context of Altizer and Hamilton’s *Radical Theology and the Death of God*. While the Hopperian post-Death-of-God stream of scholarship has some affinities with process-infused theopoetics, it is not a direct precursor to the work of Catherine Keller, whose theopoetics I follow most closely in this dissertation. Philosophers of religion John Caputo, Karmen MacKendrick, Peter Rollins, and Richard Kearney have used the term, and can often be found in collections and conversations that include Keller as well. Miller, David. “Introduction.” In *Why Persimmons? and Other Poems: Transformations of Theology in Poetry*, by Stanley R. Hopper. Atlanta: Scholars, 1987.

David Miller, “Theopoetry or Theopoetics?” *Cross Currents* 60.1 (2010) 6–23.

p. 49. Keefe-Perry embraces the challenge after his section on Faber and Keller; he attempts to conclude without being conclusive, because of the feeling of being too tidy, too total. “It is the case that process theologians believe the effect of theopoetics is a challenge to oppressive orthodoxy by means of interjecting creativity and multiplicity, and that is a gross reduction of the fullness of their perspectives.” (87).

Where the single-authored *A Way to Water* offers a more arboreal genealogy, organized by branchings of scholarship, *Theopoetic Folds* provides a rhizomatic primer. With a brief look at

the essay contributors and titles, you will realize this is less an introduction than a gathering node that extends in multiple directions and introduces expanding concepts. Theopoetics of architecture doesn't have a home in a genealogy of theopoetics but might find itself along some path through a theopoetic warren. Faber names the gravitational force (a weak force) plurality and multiplicity. I'd add materiality and apophysis (not necessarily as purposefully entangled as they become in Keller's *Cloud of the Impossible*, but their mystery elements are present/absent in different chapters of this dissertation).

Most of the essays included in this volume were first presented at the Theopoetics and the Divine Manifold conference, held in April by the Center for Process Studies at Claremont School of Theology (in association with the inauguration of Roland Faber as Kilsby Family/John B. Cobb Jr. Chair in Process Studies). (TF, 5). Faber describes the very difficult at defining theopoetics as a driver of discussion and thought: "Conversation during these periods focused largely around the ambivalence in the term theopoetics, as it is not only open to many associations—referring to the theme of poetry and aesthetic theory, to theology and literature, to a multiplicity of imageries of repressed literary qualities, myths, and metaphorical theologies—but on a more profound level becomes the basis for questioning the fixed establishment of these fields." (6).

The theopoetics found in this dissertation is situated less in language and literature and leans more toward discussions of phenomenology and sacred-secular discourses of the "maybe surprising coalition" between "continental philosophies (of religion) and process theology," that Faber sets up in his introduction. One of the achievements of his volume is to draw further attention to the "maybe-surprising coalition between. . . continental philosophy (of religion) and process theology" orbiting Whitehead's work.(2) Faber identifies Whitehead as one of the key forces in the process philosophy-theology theopoetic folds due to its recent "rediscovery in continental studies (Deleuze, Derrida, Levinas, Badiou, Kristeva, and Irigary) and its complex contestation by their suspicion not only of the death of God but of the death of metaphysics." (2) Whitehead is not central to the thought of each contributor to the Theopoetic Folds volume, but collection of essays one of the terms tethering the context to the event, which became a book. Held at the Center of Process Studies at Claremont School of Theology in 2010.

—... "expressions of a multiplicity and of a theory of multiplicity in which we can neither gain any final unity nor presuppose any common ground that would avoid shifting with its instantiations." (2).

p. 50. The scholars Keefe-Perry chooses to feature in his primer on theopoetics helps orient the reader to the (non)field:

John Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jaques Derrida: Religion Without Religion* (1997), *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (2006), and *The Insistence of God: A Theology of Perhaps* (2013). Karmen MacKendrick, *Divine Enticement: Theological Seductions* (2012), *Failing Desire* (2018), *Material Mystery: The Flesh of the World in Three Mythic Bodies* (2021), *Word Made Skin: Figuring Language at the Surface of the Flesh* (2004). Peter Rollins, *How (Not) To Speak To God* (2006), *Divine Magician: The Disappearance of Religion and the Discovery of Faith* (2015). Richard Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining* (1998), *Anatheism: Returning to God After God* (2011), *Reimagining the Sacred* (2015) editor, *Touch: Recovering Our Most Vital Sense* (2021). Richard Kearney and Melissa Fitzpatrick, *Radical Hospitality: From Thought to Action*, (2021).

Stanley Hopper, "The Literary Imagination and the Doing of Theology." In *The Way of Transfiguration: Religious Imagination as Theopoesis*, edited by R. Melvin Keiser and Tony Stoneburner, 207–29. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992.

Scott Holland, "The Poet, Theopoetics, and Theopolitics," *Cross Currents*, 64, 4 (2014): 496-508; "Theology Is a Kind of Writing: The Emergence of Theopoetics." *Cross Currents* 47.3 (1997) 317-31.

Amos Wilder, *Theopoetic: Theology and the Religious Imagination*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976.

Rubem Alves, *The Poet, The Warrior, The Prophet*. Philadelphia: Trinity, 1990; "Theopoetics: Longing and Liberation." In *Struggles for Solidarity: Liberation Theologies in Tension*, edited by Lorine M. Getz and Ruy O. Costa, 159-71. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.

Faber, Roland. *God as Poet of the World: Exploring Process Theologies*. Louisville: WJK, 2008; "Process Theology as Theopoetics." Lecture at Kresge Chapel, Claremont School of Theology, February 7, 2006 Faber, Roland, and Jeremy Fackenthal, eds. *Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness*. New York, Fordham University Press, 2013.

fn. 31. Most of the essays included in this volume were first presented at the Theopoetics and the Divine Manifold conference, held in April by the Center for Process Studies at Claremont School of Theology (in association with the inauguration of Roland Faber as Kilsby Family/John B. Cobb Jr. Chair in Process Studies). (TF, 5). Faber describes the very difficult at defining theopoetics as a driver of discussion and thought: "Conversation during these periods focused largely around the ambivalence in the term theopoetics, as it is not only open to many associations—referring to the theme of poetry and aesthetic theory, to theology and literature, to a multiplicity of imageries of repressed literary qualities, myths, and metaphorical theologies—but on a more profound level becomes the basis for questioning the fixed establishment of these fields." (6).

fn. 32. One of the achievements of his volume is to draw further attention to the "maybe-surprising coalition between. . . continental philosophy (of religion) and process theology" orbiting Whitehead's work. (TF, 2) Faber identifies Whitehead as one of the key forces in the process philosophy-theology theopoetic folds due to its recent "rediscovery in continental studies (Deleuze, Derrida, Levinas, Badiou, Kristeva, and Irigaray) and its complex contestation by their suspicion not only of the death of God but of the death of metaphysics." (TF, 2) Whitehead is not central to the thought of each contributor to the Theopoetic Folds volume, but collection of essays one of the terms tethering the context to the event, which became a book. Held at the Center of Process Studies at Claremont School of Theology in 2010.

—... "expressions of a multiplicity and of a theory of multiplicity in which we can neither gain any final unity nor presuppose any common ground that would avoid shifting with its instantiations." (TF, 2).

fn. 34. A footnote from *Intercarnations* describes the context of the essay turn chapter: "In its initial form, this essay was presented as a lecture at Wayne State University on September 23, 2015. The audience consisted of scholars in the liberal arts, mostly the English Department. A previous draft was published in Roland Faber and Jeremy Frankenthal, eds., *Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013)." Catherine Keller, "The Pluri-verse." In *Theopoetic Folds: Philosophizing Multifariousness*, edited by Roland Faber and Jeremy Feckenthal, 179-94. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013.

Keller and Caputo are in regular and supportive dialogue, and their disagreements are philosophically significant, but their work and thought also enjoy rich connectivity.

fn. 43. Arendt's thorough analysis is helpful: "Thus Aristotle, in a discussion of the different kinds of cognition in his *Metaphysics*, places *dianoia* and *episteme* *praktike*, practical insight and political science, at the lowest rank of his order, and puts above them the science of

fabrication, episteme poietike, which immediately precedes and leads to theoria, the contemplation of truth.<sup>68</sup> And the reason for this predilection in philosophy is by no means the politically inspired suspicion of action which we mentioned before, but the philosophically much more compelling one that contemplation and fabrication (theoria and poiesis) have an inner affinity and do not stand in the same unequivocal opposition to each other as contemplation and action. The decisive point of similarity, at least in Greek philosophy, was that contemplation, the beholding of something, was considered to be an inherent element in fabrication as well, inasmuch as the work of the craftsman was guided by the "idea," the model beheld by him before the fabrication process had started as well as after it had ended, first to tell him what to make and then to enable him to judge the finished product.,” *The Human Condition*, 39-41.

fn. 45. Callid Keefe-Perry’s *A Way to Water: A Theopoetics Primer* was very helpful for understanding some of the history and branches, or rhizomes, of theopoetics.

fn. 48. Caputo poetically writes about Derrida’s notion of hospitality and connects it to the possibility/impossibility of love. He writes, “Still, like it or not, that is the axiomatics of love. That aporia, that impasse, that “double bind,” as Derrida calls it, that paralyzing impossibility of love, is what makes the event of love possible, if it is possible, s’il y en a, an event meaning that something is really happening. That aporia does not defeat but defines love.” (Caputo, “Love Among the Deconstructibles”, 44).

fn. 49. Kang’s deconstructive approach to hospitality adds a necessary level of hope to a seemingly impossible task to love all others as “fellow citizens of the cosmos.” She clarifies a prophetic space in the midst of theopoetic hospitality, “The real is always about calculation and conditionality, whereas the ideal of cosmopolitan theology is about incalculability, unconditionality, and planetarity of the world-as-it-out-to-be. Therefore, the disparity between the reality and the ideality is not a space of despair but a space where one’s sense of prophetic call and passion for the impossible must come in” (Kang, 11).

fn. 50. Kang connects “the neighbor question” to Jacques Derrida’s meditation on “the foreigner question” in *Of Hospitality*. She describes incalculability as a condition for practicing hospitality toward the neighbor, and Derrida confirms the conditionality of hospitality while elaborating Kant’s break with hospitality in the face of a duty to tell the truth in Perpetual Peace. He writes, “The relationship to the foreigner is regulated by law, by the becoming-law of justice.” The relationship is regulated by both the laws and the Law of hospitality. How might we interpret the laws of hospitable architecture (“in marking the limits, powers, rights, and duties) transgress the Law of unconditional welcome of the ‘new arrival.’ When I read architectural or space metaphors in philosophy and theology, almost reflexively for those who have heightened senses of the material/spatial vibrancy (Jane Bennett and Temple Grandin), I imagine how literal the metaphor can be taken before it falls apart. The tension seems to me to be the space of the prophetic call Kang describes as living in the tension between the world-as-it-is and the world-as-it-ought to be. The place where the metaphors no longer hold up to the material arrangements informs be of the world’s construction by marking this limit of access. Theorization of space alone is not sufficient when facing the realities of institutions acting through their built structures. Derrida does not elaborate on architecture as such, but he does take a moment to recognize what might be considered as elements that belong to architecture rather than the general categories of space and place. Derrida glances the implications of the design of an actual, particular home when he writes, “But current technological developments are restructuring space in such a way that what constitutes a space of controlled and circumscribed property is not absolutely new: in order to constitute the space of a habitable house and a home, you also need an opening, a door and windows, you have to give up a passage to the outside world [l’étranger]” (Kang, 17).

fn. 52. I rely on process philosophy and new materialisms to clarify that I am not limiting material to the present, or concrete object. I’d argue that in many cases, the immaterial that architecture includes, could be described as invisible materiality. In the dissertation I want to make

sure architects do not think I am severely limiting the field by relying on a limited understanding of material.

fn. 55. Of course, the combination of sacred plus architecture invites an explosion of possibilities given the expansive nature of each word. However, in order to resist becoming reflexively categorized as belonging to a particular set of material concerns, I do not want to run the risk, based on experience, of being excluded from political and economic discussions about public space and construction projects that many assume do not necessarily intersect with a project that adopts the term sacred architecture.

fn. 60. Influential Norwegian theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz trained as an architect at the Eidgenoessische Technische Hochschule in Zurich, graduating in 1949. He then went on to study under Sigfried Giedion, Walter Gropius, and Mies van der Rohe, before returning to Norway, "where he worked with the Modernist Arne Korsmo and where he remained [...] until his death" in 2000.<sup>2</sup> He rose to international prominence with the publication of *Intentions to Architecture* (1963). Other major publications followed, including *Existence, Space and Architecture* (1971), *Genius Loci* (1980), and *The Concept of Dwelling* (1985). In this article, I draw from reception theory to examine the reception of Norberg-Schulz's work by architectural theorists and historians, and specifically his treatment of Heidegger and place as developed in *Genius Loci* (1980) and other publications. His writings, and this book in particular, have attracted consistently high levels of critical attention over more than three decades. In addition to detailing this reception, my interest is also in asking why there is a consistent level of persistent interest. Why is it that critics keep returning to Norberg-Schulz's work, and what might be revealed through this critical concern for his work? In the volume's concluding section, we are offered a group of architects who have succeeded where Rietveld apparently failed. Among these are Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Kahn, Riccardo Bofill, Paolo Portoghesi, Jorn Utzon, and Carlo Scarpa. The selection is instructive, for despite frequent mention of such Heideggerian mystifications as "being-in-the-world," "setting-into-work," and "thingness," Norberg-Schulz is essentially a nineteenth-century romantic. He values works that are regional and picturesque. He favors sacred architecture, including churches, chapels, and shrines. Most of all, he seeks an "authentic" architecture. It is this search, more than his choice of particular architects or buildings, that most clearly connects Norberg-Schulz to romanticism. It is also the most disturbing aspect of his work. Linda R. Krause, *Architecture: Meaning and Place by Christian Norberg-Schulz*. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Jun., 1991, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Jun., 1991), pp. 197-199. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/990596>

fn. 69. For example, in *Face of the Deep*, she writes, "In the rhythm and the song, the iterations of chaos itself yield the incipient order at the edge of the deep. A theology of becoming negotiates its solidities, its solidarities, *within* the flux. It sketches not disorder but responsive, flexible and *therefore steadfast* forms of self-organization. We gain the courage of our connections," (*FD*, 216). Chaosmos is introduced on pages 12-13 in *Face of the Deep*. Keller also discusses the edge of chaos and order in terms of chaosmos and the Deulizian fold in her book *Cloud of the Impossible* on 116, 121 and 169.

fn. 71. The development of almshouses in New England were built to house "the poor" in the practice of combining *caritas*, population management, and public hygiene. Michel Foucault's biopolitics of population and governmentality maps the historical development of policing and public health and the general populations of hospitals became specialized infrastructures of confinement and quarantine for the criminal, the mad, and the homeless. Michel Foucault studies in *The Birth of the Clinic* and *History of Madness* are both reflected in his engagement with Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. Reading the panopticon for its architectural arrangements of power informs how the architecture of a social problem participates in the construction of who or where a problem occurs. In order to understand the dynamism of sacred space, "we must understand the function of power – divine, social, and personal – within it," Jeanne Halgren Kilde concludes in *Sacred Power, Sacred Space* (Kilde, 199). Sovereign power of omniveillance requires a



multivalent understanding of the built environment that cannot be captured by the limited categories of sacred architecture that focus on aesthetics and representation.

i. Poiesis in Continental Philosophy

See Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Technique of the Present: On On Kawara” and “Making Poetry” in *Multiple Arts: The Muses II* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), Giorgio Agamben, “Poiesis and Praxis” in *The Man Without Content* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994 IT., 1999 US.), Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*. Edited by William Lovitt, Harper & Row New York, 1977.

ii. Architecture

The permanence of time as eternity in the form of an “architecture of awe” erases the kind of architecture that foregrounds tectonic assemblages, such as those weaving grasses for screens or binding bamboo for structural support. These practices are considered both primitive and temporary. Paradoxically, they relate to an “earlier time” of human development, yet are temporary and do not last throughout history – as is categorized in historical architecture surveys.

iii. Techne

The possibility of poiesis to accommodate materiality signals a relationship of techne - knowledge, skill, practice, technique. Registering the proximity of techne to tectonic architecture provides interconnections between disciplines. Architecture as a practice entails the combining, ordering, and choreographing of space (and spatial experience). For American architect and theorist Stan Allen, architecture goes beyond the local or tectonic. He describes architecture in terms of non-hierarchical fields and swarms - and as an intervening choreographer of velocities, vectors, and forces. This approach, key to the present dissertation, takes the building beyond a limited context to consider its surrounding topographies, events, and fields and proposes an architecture that materializes these fields in expressive tectonic arrays.

iv. Conviviality

To actualize the capacity for a type of conviviality, the kind of urgent planetary living together that Catherine Keller elaborates on throughout the politically vibrant relational theological texts, we need to continue to investigate trauma and the presentations of toxic hegemony, nonhuman toxins, and somatic toxic stress as inextricably conditioned by personal and social ecologies. My dissertation is an extension of Namsoon Kang’s prophetic call for a “cosmopolitan theology,” that pursues a reconstituted neighbor-love and conviviality to come, with an elaborated understanding of interpersonal and institutional traumatic toxicity. The theologically infused concept of flesh, in comparison to body, as Mayra Rivera maps in *Poetics of the Flesh*, “cross[es] the boundaries between the individual body and the world” (Rivera, 2).

What is at stake is how the idea of transmitted affects undermines the dichotomy between the individual and the environment and the related opposition between the biological and the social. See, Teresa Brennan, *Transmission of Affect*, 7

My wider philosophical-theological questions concern the possibility-impossibility of conviviality - a just and sustainable life-together in contested spaces, such as the city. To whom does public space belong? How are “rights to the city,” a phrase popularized by Henri Lefebvre, created and implemented? Attempts to understand the philosophical and theological reference points for how built environments are imagined and constructed can help to offer answers about who has the “right to the city” and who has, as Hannah Arendt posits in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, the “right to have rights.”

Debilitating territories are crisscrossed by intensities, sensations, and affects which act unevenly on the most visible and vulnerable bodies. Territories of intensities, in this context, are both sites of and agents in the materialization of events that have often reached the level of public awareness and engagement; public hearings, political debates, and visible protests shape and are shaped by these locations. Living together requires navigating, constructing, and sharing the materiality of place and site. Walls, sidewalks, shelters, and hospitals are agents in the assemblages of spatial power relations. Critical architecture research and practice can contest material and spatial inequalities within the public sphere.

v. The importance of Keller's use of the term

Admittedly, the focus given so far to human bodies can be read as anthropocentric. Still, it is more anthro-concerned with conviviality, where the convivium is a part of terrapoiesis. The challenge is to keep from separating poetics (poiesis) and practice (praxis).

A theoetics of architecture should not be read as antagonistic to historical studies sacred or theologies of sacred architecture. A theoetics of architecture could be read along with projects in the history of sacred architecture. Instead, I explore more affective architectures that challenge disciplinary boundaries. For example, creating pathways in philosophies of religion and theoetics that open clearer paths to engagement with architects such as Keller Easterling, Sean Lally, Andre Jacque, David Gissen, and Eyal Weizman, whose practices embrace affects, energies, and assemblages that transgress the boundaries between material and immaterial, human and nonhuman.

Transdisciplinary dialogue between architecture and religion that can accommodate sensory experience and material ecologies will require new approaches beyond "sacred architecture." Projects that explore sacred architecture and, logically, focus on constructing churches, temples, mosques, and synagogues (or, occasionally, sites of memory and spiritual meditation) might benefit from an expanded definition of architecture. Engagement with various contemporary architects and theorists will help expand conceptualizations of building as an arrangement of non-static material assemblages, fields, and affects that blur rigid distinctions between the building-object and the human-subject.

Finally, theoetics of architecture becomes my attempt to think alongside sacred architecture but from a different entry point. Theoetics of architecture names the site of aporia where the ideal of theoetic hospitality for the neighbor meets the force and friction of material-mediated, proximal location in space-time.

## CHAPTER TWO CONTENT NOTES

i. Thomas Jefferson, Model Enlightenment Architect

According to Wilson, Jefferson's architectural observations were informed by his reading of the nature of man from the buildings he encountered. He lamented, "construction practices needed to evolve beyond the production of the crude, ugly wooden structures and awkwardly proportioned brick buildings that were found in Williamsburg." Architecture, in his words, "seems to have shed its maledictions over this land." (emphasis added). (32) Notably, Wilson emphasizes, Jefferson possessed both "the eye of an architect" and "the fastidious gaze of a naturalist," as evidenced by his keen attention to detail. Jefferson was particularly inspired by the Maison Carrée in the south of France, which he regarded as "one of the most beautiful, if not the most beautiful and precious morsel of architecture left us by antiquity." (32) However, he never visited the Maison Carrée, which Wilson explains is nearly an exact replica of a Tuscan-style Roman temple described in the writings of the famed architect Vitruvius. Jefferson believed that

Greco-Roman classicism “had not been corrupted by capricious flourishes of the late baroque’s rococo period that suited the tastes of the French aristocracy” (Wilson, 32).

Thomas Jefferson was a passionate advocate for thoughtful architectural design. When he learned that the political leaders in Virginia were proceeding with constructing a building that was crude, he wrote a letter to James Madison, urging him to halt the construction, even though the first bricks had been laid. To make the most persuasive argument for the Latrobe Capitol, Jefferson employed his ability to articulate his vision alongside professional architectural elements. He ordered drawings from Charles-Louis Clerisseau, a French architect and draftsman, and he solicited model-maker Jean-Pierre Fouquet to create a model of the Virginia State Capitol. As he wrote to Madison, the didactic purpose of this effort was “to improve the taste of my countrymen, to increase their reputation, to reconcile to them the respect of the world and procure them it’s [sic] praise.” (32) In this letter to his colleague, Jefferson added, “America, though but a child of yesterday, has already given hopeful proofs of genius,” hoping to win the admiration of Europeans. Given Jefferson’s concern about people being “properly nurtured” in the Notes and his work with Latrobe, it is not surprising that Jefferson and Latrobe were involved in designing the Virginia State Penitentiary, which opened in 1800. The penitentiary was viewed as a technology for reforming the character and soul of a prisoner. (More on this in the following chapter.)

Jefferson was deeply opposed to the construction of a “tasteless ‘monument to our Barbarism’” by Virginia politicians. He insisted that the state capitol should embody “the virtues of durability, utility, and beauty” through a neoclassical design (33).

Gikandi, Simon. *The Culture of Taste: The Making of an Aesthetic Life in England*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996. – “‘culture of taste,’” writes theorist Simon Gikandi, also harbored “repressive tendencies — namely, the attempt to use culture to conceal the intimate connection between modern subjectivity and the political economy of slavery.”

This interdependence between the formation of a new white American culture, one that included the arts of building, and the enslavement of African Peoples, justified by their presumed innate mental and physical inferiority, can be found in Notes on the State of Virginia, which Jefferson wrote in the same period in which he conceived the designs for Virginia’s capitol building.

The traditional categories (racial taxonomies of Europeans, Aborigines, and Africans (34-5) through which architecture is examined, such as aesthetics, phenomenology, construction sciences, art, and craft, fail to fully capture the significance of natural history and philosophy in relation to American whiteness. Both aesthetics and physiognomy are rooted in the ocular-centered, Enlightenment-era classification systems. Architecture, being a part of culture, is particularly involved in the realm of aesthetics. This is significant because there was a growing trend of tying intelligence and creativity to a biological understanding of the human. For example, Carl Linnaeus described *Homo sapiens americanus* as “ill-tempered, ... obstinate, contented, free.” *Homo sapiens asiaticus* was “severe, haughty, desirous.” *Homo sapiens afer* was “crafty, slow, foolish.” And *Homo sapiens europaeus* was—of course—“active, very smart, inventive.” <https://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/2001/04/olson-p3.htm#:~:text=He%20described%20Homo%20sapiens%20americanus,%2C%20very%20smart%2C%20inventive.%22>

Wilson highlights the significance of fundamental ideologies in shaping an architectural perspective. Despite the abolition of slavery, the concept of *Homo Sapiens Afer* persisted. Consequently, Jefferson could advocate for the end of slavery while still holding the belief that black people were inferior to white people. According to Wilson, “The aesthetics of blackness...affirmed the superiority of Europeans and their whiteness” (37). This is evident in Jefferson’s Notes on Virginia, where he expresses his outright disgust towards the perceived lack of beauty in blackness. Wilson points to a specific place in the Notes where “The overall lack of beauty in blackness visually and viscerally appalled Jefferson.” (37).

Jefferson used the higher elevation of his plantation as an architectural solution to address the contradiction between the ideals of freedom and the reality of slavery. He arranged for the slave quarters and dependencies to be situated beneath the main living spaces and in hidden passages, so that the neoclassical buildings with their white columns would present a picturesque image of democratic values overlooking pristine nature, seemingly untouched by the unsightly presence of the enslaved people who worked tirelessly to maintain the land and the lives of white citizens. (42)

Using the principles of the Enlightenment, Jefferson justified placing Black people at the bottom of the social and political hierarchy in America, just as he designed their living spaces to be located underground and perpetually servile. Jefferson believed that Black people lacked the ability to think critically, and were unable to comprehend concepts such as beauty and freedom. (42)

In Jefferson's time, the aesthetic perfection of white skin and the capacity to reason were believed to be the hallmarks of the "European man," placing him in a "position of superiority above the other races." (27) These characteristics were seen as evidence of the ability to understand the law and appreciate beauty, both of which were rooted in European ideas about civilization. Architecture, therefore, was not merely symbolic of ideals but served as evidence of the perceived world order. The whiteness of the Capitol not only symbolized the whiteness of skin but also reinforced the belief that black people were incapable of constructing beautiful buildings like those designed by Latrobe. At the turn of the 18th century, black people were believed to be unable to recognize beauty or construct buildings of beauty.

Symbolism and representation are undoubtedly present in the designs of these buildings. However, by exclusively emphasizing the symbolic, it obscures how we interpret the motivations of the designers, which can sometimes be contradictory, dissonant, or a blind spot in their discussions and recounting of the architecture. Wilson's work highlights how problematic it is to rely solely on the designers' public descriptions of their architecture without recognizing it as communicating a specific way of approaching architecture's meaning, its attachment to the virtues of the day, and how design choices are justified. We cannot rely on the architect's statement to reveal everything that does not fit a narrative that justifies the "benevolence" of grand architecture.

Thomas Jefferson, one of the proponents of architecture's potential to contribute to edification, wrote to Virginia politicians, urging them to reconsider their plans for the capital and instead contemplate his proposal that architecture should do more than merely serve a functional purpose. Jefferson, co-designer of state architecture, began designing the Virginia State Capitol in the early or mid-1770s, (<https://www.lva.virginia.gov/exhibits/capitol/design/#:~:text=Jefferson%20drew%20his%20first%20design,cubic%20architecture%22%20and%20the%20Orders.>) concurrent with the drafting of The Declaration of Independence. The Capitol was Jefferson's declaration of independence, not only from British architecture but also from creating an American identity that was distinct from but equal to and had the potential to surpass the English. In his correspondence regarding the Capitol's design, Jefferson repeatedly emphasized the cultivation of taste and the evidence of human genius in their accomplishments. In "Notes on the Virginia Capitol: Nation, Race, and Slavery in Jefferson's America," Wilson explores how Jefferson's Notes on Virginia cannot be understood without considering his architectural projects. This approach supports America's creation narratives.

## ii. Craig Wilkins

For architect Craig L. Wilkins, author of *The Aesthetics of Equity*, the profession's focus on awards, competitions, and media recognition reflects an ideological escape into the realm of Kantian aesthetics. The separation is not as stark as a clean separation. But to make a significant distinction in the course of the architectural profession, Kim Dovey, architect and urban designer states: "The claim for the autonomy of architecture rests upon a separation of form from

instrumental function. And it also rests implicitly upon a broader Kantian aesthetic of universal judgment, Kant's transcendental aesthetic is an a priori judgment which is at once both universal and subjective." (63) Wilkins continues, "Increasingly possible separation of the phases of the architectural phases. The Cartesian separation of mind and body appears again. Robert Tombesi, in *The Work of Nations*, puts in architectural terms by arguing that the 'intellectual labor' phase, the intangible commodities of conceptualization, creating, and problem-solving — and the people who do it — becomes the service marketed to the client, with the 'physical labor' phase, the tangible commodities of drawing and other technical and physical materials — and those who produce them — are rendered solely 'instruments at the service of the architect.'" (84)

The increasing globalization of labor exchange and associated gaps in technology "produces the painful dichotomy of more people of color in the *making* of architecture but not in the *creating* of 'architecture'" — the intellectual component (of which the apex is design), at least for the time being." (84-5). Wilkins' critique of the education and profession of architecture incorporates a decolonial lens. The epistemologies that uphold the profession are deeply rooted in Western metaphysics and Whiteness. My elaboration on the critique of 'the architect' or the practice of architecture should not be read as a critique universally of practicing architects, although the two are clearly entwined, to mistake the two would be to ignore the architects that are critical of their field and practices - the outsider speaking.

Governmental debates in England and Australia over the separation of a trade school training from university education during the 19th century give clear accounts of the reasoning that led to the architect being defined as having a higher level of reasoning and not needing to know the base work of technicians as long as they knew just enough from observation to direct their work.

For Wilkins, "If architecture — as it is currently being narrowed down to — is defined by design [services] only, then it is clear that for the most part, design is becoming even more, both in perception and practice, the province of white architects, not only in the United States but the world over. Despite evidence that African American practitioners design and do it well, architect Harvey Gantt has argued, '*Everyday our competence is on the line,*' when it is considered at all." (85)

iii. Kevin Seasoltz

For example, when discussing the reconstruction of the Cathedral of the Lady of Angels in Los Angeles, Seasoltz provides a detailed description of its exterior and interior architecture. He argues that the effectiveness of a church building is ultimately determined by the experience of worshipers and ministers, but he also acknowledges the intense controversy surrounding the \$189 million project, with some arguing that the money should have been used to alleviate poverty in the archdiocese.

It is the actual experience of worshipers and ministers that determines the effectiveness of a church building. . . Intense controversy has surrounded the design and construction of this 189-million-dollar building. Eloquent objections were raised by those who felt that the money should have been used to alleviate the conditions of poverty in the archdiocese. In fairness, however, it must be noted that the cathedral has already drawn very large numbers, both worshippers and tourists. It is one of the few places in downtown Los Angeles that is open on weekends, and it is located in an area of the city that for decades had no middle-class residential base but is beginning to acquire one through gradual gentrification of downtown Los Angeles. More important, the huge, poor Hispanic population of the area has already found a safe and stable public space that remains open for long hours without an admission fee. The poor people are there in large numbers leaving simple bouquets, notes and ex voto objects at the small outdoor shrine dedicated to our Lady of Guadalupe. Actually, the cathedral complex comprises three buildings: the cathedral itself, a center, and a residence for the cardinal and the priests who serve the cathedral. The center provides office space, outreach to the poor, and space for conferences and meetings of various kinds. (285)

Seasoltz notes that the cathedral has drawn large numbers of worshipers and tourists and that it provides a safe and stable public space for the poor Hispanic population in the area (285). While Seasoltz briefly mentions the cost of the project, this passage raises intriguing and complicated questions about the debates and conversations that are needed to more fully understand the complex factors that shape architectural projects.

Theological arguments are often separated from “practical” considerations such as cost, but when they come together and reinforce each other, we can see the clash of values in decision-making that results in limited options. Like today, the project that has the institution's support feels inevitable. Its grandeur is not just in its vertical height but also in its inevitability, as it will come into existence through insistence. In a way, it exists before its construction, and its effect can be felt when decisions are made “on behalf of others,” and the decision-makers are determined. If it has reached the stage of public discussion, the project has already been approved by the organization's leaders.

iv. Lingering Questions—

Questions inevitably arise regarding the status of sacred architecture that was assembled through unethical means. Can such architecture maintain its radiance and uplifting righteousness? Where does the history of sacred architecture begin? To be celebrated for its beauty and glory, what artistic and theological origin story is required for the building to be recognized as sacred architecture? If sacred architecture was assembled by malevolent processes, can it maintain its radiance and uplifting righteousness? Alternatively, is it necessary to develop other frameworks for understanding these places that might lead to different conclusions or even inspire the creation of different types of architecture? These questions are complicated, and the arguments shift among different denominations and unique communities. Consequently, any critique of these traditions must be undertaken with great care and attention.

If it does maintain its status as sacred architecture, do we have other ways of discussing these places that might lead to different answers or even towards different creations? The issue is daunting because both religion and architecture have such old and deep traditions. This makes it challenging to move or dislodge something that has been formed through processes that were given the most care and attention by people in their respective fields.

Footnote Commentary.

fn. 1. Jacques Derrida, "Architecture Where Desire May Live" in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (1992) interview with Eva Meyer (architect and theorist, architecture firm Raumlabor in Berlin), 319.

The sentences that come before this quote read: [Descartes'] 'Meditations,' the 'Discourse on Method' are full of these architectonic representations [metaphors] which, in addition, always have political relevance. When Aristotle wants to give an example of theory and practice, he quotes the 'architekton': he knows the origin of things, he is a theorist who can also teach and has at his command the labourers who are incapable of independent thought. And with that a political hierarchy is established: architectonics is defined as an art of systems, as an art therefore suitable for the rational organization of complete branches of knowledge. I consequently ask myself how, before the separation between theory and practice, between thinking and architecture, a way of thinking inked to the architectural event could have existed. (319)

[. . .]

For some time, something like a deconstructive procedure has been establishing itself an attempt to free oneself from the oppositions imposed by the history of philosophy such as physis/techne, God/man, philosophy/architecture. . . . Because of being taken for granted they restrict thinking. (320)

fn. 3. Latrobe's design of the Baltimore Cathedral (Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary) overlapped with his work on The Virginia State Penitentiary with Thomas Jefferson and (1806-1808)# (Architect of Public Buildings, Congregational Church in Charleston known as the Circular Church, First Presbyterian Church in Augusta, 14 courthouses, 13 jails, the insane asylum in Columbia and works and stayed with Thomas Jefferson at Monticello)- each designer had churches, penitentiaries, and civic buildings in their portfolios. The potential for architecture to reform a person's morality had the processes of sanctification of the soul through meditation as its model. The cell and solitary confinement were built as reforms to the prison system and attempts at reforming those who were confined. This connection reveals Latrobe's conviction that architectural design and social reform are inseparable. The prison as a building type is a post-Renaissance phenomenon in the West, promoting moral reform in lieu of corporal punishment, and reflecting the impact of humanism on architectural theory and practice.# While punishment was a tool to achieve a greater salvific goal, it assumed that those enacting violence were not partaking in the desire to produce pain and suffering.

The chapter examines stated intent to notice when it is used as a justification for action or to distance oneself or an institution from liability, as unintended consequences are often foreseeable (consequences, or effects, might be unintended, but that does not mean they are unforeseeable.). The concepts of intent and comfort emerge as familiar categories in systems of whiteness, where white actors remain blameless or even ethically right as long as their intent was morally good.

In *The Fabrication of Virtue: English Prison Architecture 1750-1840*, Robin Evans explores how virtuous ends influenced the plans of public, prison, and church architecture. Architecture was used to shape materials, measurements, and order in the pursuit of reform programs. During the Enlightenment, Christian piety and rationalistic psychology combined to form an amalgamation that shaped the prison, where sanctification and behavioral modification were the goals of the reform process. (393) Evans argues that the technologies of moral formation did not disappear with the development of modern prisons; they expanded beyond the prison walls and informed many aspects of governmentality. This supports Foucault's theory of governmentality and his description of panopticism, which will be discussed more directly in the next chapter.

Evans significantly adds: "In order to reform them they had been submitted to complete isolation; but this absolute solitude...is beyond the strength of man, ... it does not reform, it kills." "Unmitigated solitude" William Strickland designed the Pittsburgh Penitentiary in Pennsylvania in 1827. (Evans, 318). "...new varieties of institutions were built in the hope that mankind could be raised toward perfection by a form of administration channeled through a carefully distributed architecture." (Evans, 394)

See also, John M. Bryan, "Robert Mills, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Thomas Jefferson, and the South Carolina Penitentiary Project, 1806-1808," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Jan., 1984, Vol. 85, No. 1 (Jan., 1984), pp. 1-21.

fn. 5 In order to resist becoming reflexively categorized as belonging to a particular set of material concerns, I do not want to run the risk, based on experience, of being excluded from political and economic discussions about public space and construction projects that many assume do not necessarily intersect with a project that adopts the term sacred architecture. In a longer discussion, I would present multiple examples of sacred and religious architecture course descriptions offered at design and architecture schools.

fn. 6. Vitruvius, the "founder" of architecture, was a first-century BCE Roman architect and author of the 10 volume *De architectura*, in which he described the principles of architecture in terms of reflecting the cosmic order of the universe in the temples and civic buildings. First-century Greco-Roman architecture marked one's position and place in the world. In "The Domestic and the Numinous in Sacred Architecture," Barrie concludes his essay with a section on the "primitive hut" in which he explores various mythologies and philosophies that make "this simple dwelling" characterized by its "maternal hearth" as our ontological home in the world.

fn. 8. Wilken explains provides a thorough reception analysis of Norber-Schulz's critical reception: "He rose to international prominence with the publication of *Intentions to Architecture* (1963).

Other major publications followed, including *Existence, Space and Architecture* (1971), *Genius Loci* (1980), and *The Concept of Dwelling* (1985). In this article, I draw from reception theory to examine the reception of Norberg-Schulz's work by architectural theorists and historians, and specifically his treatment of Heidegger and place as developed in *Genius Loci* (1980) and other publications. His writings, and this book in particular, have attracted consistently high levels of critical attention over more than three decades. In addition to detailing this reception, my interest is also in asking why there is a consistent level of persistent interest. Why is it that critics keep returning to Norberg Schulz's work, and what might be revealed through this critical concern for his work?," 2.

Linda R. Krause, "Architecture: Meaning and Place by Christian Norberg-Schulz." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Jun., 1991, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Jun., 1991), pp. 197-199. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/990596>. Cross is highly critical of Norber-Schulz's romantic tendencies toward privileging sacred architecture in his writings. She argues, "In the volume's concluding section we are offered a group of architects who have succeeded where Rietveld apparently failed. Among these are Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Kahn, Riccardo Bofill, Paolo Portoghesi, Jorn Utzon, and Carlo Scarpa. The selection is instructive, for despite frequent mention of such Heideggerian mystifications as "being-in-the-world," "setting-into-work," and "thingness," Norberg-Schulz is essentially a nineteenth-century romantic. He values works that are regional and picturesque. He favors sacred architecture, including churches, chapels, and shrines. Most of all, he seeks an "authentic" architecture. It is this search, more than his choice of particular architects or buildings, that most clearly connects Norberg-Schulz to romanticism. It is also the most disturbing aspect of his work," 198.

fn. 9. The debates around architecture's novel distinctions generated both literature and buildings that had a lasting impact. Not everyone subscribed to the categorization of architecture and the architect as discussed above. The "primitive hut" remained a significant theme in architectural theory punctuated by Gottfried Semper's attendance at the Great Exhibition of 1851. The exhibition showcased imperial conquest and the invention/hierarchicalization of race, including the notion of the primitive itself. It is noteworthy that Kenneth Frampton interprets Semper's insights into tectonics, to critique the modern celebration of the scenographic (which emerged in the Enlightenment's and exploded in "the age of mechanical reproduction" (see Walter Benjamin's writings on technology and media). Its genesis is rooted in the spectacle of the Great Exhibition, where Semper is said to have observed and based on which he subsequently drew a prototypical hut.

fn. 29. The Great Chain of Being is an ancient cosmology that continues to be influential, although direct references to it as a "chain of being" are rare, and most people would not identify that they have a working life-being hierarchy - the underlying idea of a hierarchical view of life, from the divine to the inanimate, still functions.

fn. 35. Wilson's essay examines the relationship between Jefferson's ideas for the new republic and the accompanying architecture. According to Wilson, the new building envisioned by Jefferson in 1776 "needed both to symbolize and to enable the power 'of the people' to govern and adjudicate the laws of the new state." (Wilson, 23) Jefferson intended for "the neo-classical structure was to serve as a model for America's new civic architecture. It modeled what would become the seat of the federal government." (Wilson, 23).

Additionally, Wilson's argument includes two of Latrobe's watercolors and Thomas Jefferson's drawn plan for the Virginia State Capitol. One of Latrobe's watercolors depicts the view of Richmond from the Bank of the James River in 1798, while the other "documents a white overseer keeping dutiful watch over two enslaved women who, with hoes raided in midair, cleared the burnt remains of a forest for either cultivation or new construction." (Wilson, 25).

fn. 45. Carter writes, "Akin to Callois description of the sacred as a kind of ecstatic and aboriginal metamorphosis, ...thinking with Angela of Foligno, a thirteenth-century Italian female mystic, Bataille figures the sacred as sort of fecund, negative space, and 'abyss of possibilities...where the possible is the impossible itself' and in which 'exstatic, breathless, experience ...destroys the depths...of being by



unveiling' a nonpossessable, a nonsubjective zone irreducible to property and thus irreducible to propertied subjectivity." Carter, "Black Malpractice," (Carter, 70). Bataille, *Inner Experience*, 105.

Carter continues his intricate engagement with a combination of ecstatic thinkers including Roger Callois, Georges Bataille and Sylvia Wynter to formulate, "beyond the logic of separability." "To dwell in the spacetime of difference without separability, and thus in ecstatic temporality, is to dwell in the experience of carnival time, which is the experience of being out of time, of dwelling in time-out, in out-time." Carter, "Black Malpractice," 71.

fn. 47. "In fact, only society's ideal being (that which authoritatively orders and prohibits) is expressed in actual architectural constructions... This is the form of cathedrals and palaces through which the Church or the State addresses and imposes silence on the multitude." (Bataille, *Architecture*, 1929) "From the start human and architectural orders are associated with one another, architecture being only the development of the human order." (Bataille included in Ballantyne, *Architecture Theory*, 16).

fn. 52. J. Kameron Carter, *The Anarchy of Black Religion: A Mystic Song* (Duke University Press, 2023). Carter writes, "...possible meanings of this Greek term (ἀρχή) are foundation, sovereignty, or rule (and by extension law, as in rule of law). But there are other meanings as well. Archē, Long observes, has the sense of "beginning, starting point, principle, underlying substance as primordial . . . ultimate undemonstrable," (Carter, *The Anarchy of Black Religion*, 8). He continues, "...principle . . . something 'original.'" These senses of archē echo inside of such notions as "indigeneity" and "indigenous people" as well as in such colonially deployed terms as the primitive, a term built on the shadow concept of civilization and the civilized." (Carter, 9).

## INTERLUDE ONE CONTENT NOTES

In a publication from 2018, author and activist Sasha Costanza-Chock articulates a series of questions about how architectural processes currently operate with foresight about how they might be transformed. Through an intersectional, feminist lens, Costanza-Chock pushes designers to reflect on the procedural (how design happens), distributive (how are risks, burdens, benefits, and accountabilities shared), and narrative (what stories and values get encoded in decision-making) frameworks of justice in the built environment. (<https://dl.designresearchsociety.org/drs-conference-papers/drs2018/researchpapers/38/>) In explaining these principles, they encourage designers to foreground practices that resist the reproduction of inequitable political economies at all phases of a project's duration. As with any framework, design justice approaches are not monolithic and are continually open for critique and adaptation. <https://dl.designresearchsociety.org/drs-conference-papers/drs2018/researchpapers/38/>

The visualizations provided by the design team helped specify the spatial dimensions of a community's vision: to create a center that foregrounds inclusivity and collectivity and confronts the legacies of architecture's participation in the maintenance of inequities. Renderings of speculative building renovations, including the design of a newly accessible entry pavilion, encouraged conversations about priorities for design decision-making.

### i. Carroll and Latrobe Co-designers—

The architect or designer is rarely the exclusive designer of sacred architecture. Client-architect and patron-architect relationships guide many of the decisions that result in the final object. Bishop Carroll and the building committee for the Baltimore Basilica influenced the design. In contrast to the "creation myths" surrounding "America's First Cathedral," the design process was messy.

Latrobe's neo-colonial design of the Cathedral was his second choice. He sent two designs to Carroll, one Gothic and the other neoclassical. Latrobe noted that the neoclassical design would cost less, but he preferred the Gothic design, yet it is unclear what drew him to the Gothic design - perhaps he looked forward to working in a different style or he imagined the Gothic style to be more appropriate to a cathedral. The church's building committee was formed to help make decisions about the church's design,

so it was not the effort of only two men. Carroll had the seat of authority, but there were debates and disagreements that were not included in the myth of the church's majesty. The project's cost was a constant concern, making the economics of property ownership, material costs, and access to slave labor integral parts of the building's genesis.

Carroll and Marechal made theological arguments for the Baltimore Cathedral, but they also made practical remarks about the building. The theological and “practical” aspects begin to blur when we consider the factors that made the conditions for the building to come into existence. Carroll argued that the Baltimore Cathedral would be more convenient for the city's Catholics. The convenience for this population was weighed against providing more support to the surrounding chapels and churches that needed repairs. Church records show that they went into debt to build the Cathedral, and many surrounding Catholic churches were also in debt. The majority of the investment went into building the Cathedral, but the location was difficult for rural parishioners to travel to.

The relationship between sacred architecture and its origins is complex and multifaceted, and it raises many challenging questions. Origin myths are significant for establishing a group's identity. However, the origin story of America's First Cathedral fails to mention the displacement of tribes and indigenous people. It does not begin with the colonial desire for more land, which could be converted into property. (29) The origin story also excludes the stories of the people who touched the land and the soil upon which the cathedral was built. Black people were used to clear and cultivate the land, and they were "purchased and imported as a labor force to tend the tobacco fields, and unlike indentured European laborers, could be held in perpetuity." (29)

ii. Benjamin Henry Latrobe

Latrobe chose to incorporate neoclassical elements in both Jefferson's projects and Archbishop Carroll's Cathedral, setting them apart from the prevalent Gothic architecture in Europe during that time. The motivations behind neoclassicism were varied, but for Jefferson, who was a patron of Latrobe, neo-classical design represented a tangible manifestation of liberal ideas. He believed that it would help transform the malleable American character and signal to Europe that the burgeoning American nation had equal reason, genius, and resources. In fact, the Baltimore Basilica, one of the most prominent examples of neo-classical design from that period, exemplifies this idea. However, it is important to note that even when black men were acknowledged as having contributed to the construction of significant buildings, their work was often attributed to a white originator or overseen by a white master, as Wilson highlights in her *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums*, which chronicles the struggle to be included in the international fairs alongside the nations examples of architectural achievement.

Wilson demonstrates this by providing more context surrounding the discourse around architecture. She shows that even in 1806, when there was a report in the newspaper describing the ceremonial events Bishop John Carroll performed at the laying of the cornerstone of Baltimore Cathedral, we can still look for the absence of people, place, and materiality that must be hidden to support the democratic ideals that neoclassical buildings symbolized. The problem is that a building's design is planned for in the minds of a few, and when we read about a building, it is described with almost a singular vision, as if each element does what either the artist's intent or the interpreter's reasoning.

## CHAPTER THREE CONTENT NOTES

fn. 2. A short excerpt from the introduction of “Contested Territories” provides added context: R. Kyle Warren and Ben Peterson, “Contested Territories: Evaluating the Limits and Liberties of Design in Public Space,” *Proceedings of School of Thought Proceedings: Rethinking Architectural Pedagogy*,” March 5-7, 2020.

“On August 2, 2019, the city of Boston mobilized multiple city departments in the policing and expulsion of individuals experiencing homelessness at the boundaries of Boston’s South End and Roxbury neighborhoods. In a coordinated effort by police and public works departments, people were displaced, personal belongings were seized and destroyed, and multiple arrests were made. Citing an incident of violent crime against a Suffolk County corrections officer, the city legitimized the self-named Operation Clean Sweep as part of “an effort to address ongoing community concerns in the general area of Massachusetts Avenue and Southampton Street in Roxbury” (Dwyer 2019).

In the vacuum of opaque policy agendas or motivations, a flurry of news reports and social media posts constructed a complicated series of narratives to fill the gap. Headlines signaled the mounting problems of “Methadone Mile,” the “troubled district” surrounding the Boston Medical Center, and reductively conflated the issues of homelessness, substance use disorder, and public space into a tangle of ideas, affects, and anecdotes. These narratives have lingered, migrated, and exploded. The accounts of tension among individuals experiencing homelessness, those seeking treatment for substance use disorder, service providers, advocates, neighborhood residents, and business owners have adversely positioned, accurately or not, the concerns of public health, public safety, and community “quality of life” concerns.”

fn. 6. A focus on the category “bodies” and “life” tends to underestimate the role of the management and production of space has on the bodies that become fixed to perceptions of location that informs the creation of figures, such as the vagrant and delinquent, in part due to the perception of the spaces they inhabit and how they are inhabited. I plan on discussing this topic more thoroughly in a proposed dissertation chapter on Black Space.

Foucauldian scholarship expands along with a staggering number of vectors. I limit the scope of biopolitical scholarship to trajectories found in *The Right to Maim* and *Security Theology, Surveillance, and the Politics of Fear*. While each text utilizes some parts of the notion of biopolitics, each one also adapts it to their project and corrects some of the lacunae in his original work. I have chosen these works to pull from their conceptual frameworks and learn how to ethically use theoretical categories across contexts to more effectively analyze power without carelessly reducing events with superficial analogies.

In public discourse, homelessness is often disarticulated from debates about neoliberal capitalism, gender and sexuality based violence, livable wages, immigration policies, climate gentrification, and epidemics. Homelessness, as I have argued elsewhere, is not a stable positionality or identity. People experiencing homelessness have intersecting identities and multiplicities of difference that cannot be captured by the label “homeless.” While person-first language, such as “people experiencing homelessness,” is politically productive in pursuing collective activism, the attachment of personhood connected to homelessness is often extended beyond the scope of housing to form an abstract totalizing experience and constituency.

fn. 8. Burchell points to *Abnormal* connection to some of Foucault's other works, he suggests “Further examples of this type of analysis can be found in the first lectures of *Abnormal*, where Foucault is concerned with the way in which medico-legal practice produced a psychological-moral double of the legal offense, created the ‘dangerous individual,’ and, eventually, through the functioning of power of normalization came to constitute itself as the authority responsible for the control of ‘abnormal individuals’” (xix).

fn. 10. A mixed figure: the monster, the masturbator, and the individual who cannot be integrated within the normative system of education. Psychiatry and racism combine to produce psychiatry as social defense. The monstrous body is caught between powers. Foucault explains, “In the eighteenth century, then, the monster appears and functions precisely at the point where nature and law are joined. It brings with it natural transgress, the mixture of species, and the blurring of limits and characteristics. However, it is a monster only because it is also a legal labyrinth, a violation of and an obstacle to the law, both transgression and undecidability at the level of the law. In the eighteenth century the monster is a juridical-natural complex,” (*H of S I*, 65).

fn. 17. Foucault and Deleuze discussed mutual approaches to theory, at times interpreting one another's approach in a way that helps clarify their projects. The casual nature of the conversation allows for a less rigid policing of Foucault's terminology. In the interview, Deleuze says he envisions the intellectuals project as adding to a conceptual toolbox. Foucault did not object to Deleuze's interpretation. They discuss theory's innate characteristic to change through relays from theory to praxis and vice versa. Foucault, Michel and Gilles Deleuze. "Intellectuals and Power: A conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze," 1972.

fn. 22. Catherine Keller, *Political Theology of the Earth: Our Planetary Emergency and the Struggle for a New Public* (Columbia University Press, 2018), 12-13. Keller notes the emergent political theology discourse "will not deliver redemption, only some timely transdisciplinary insight" that key in on some creative philosophical insights for politics, theology, and their enmeshment.

Newman notes that "secularism is a highly contested concept and that its status today is uncertain." Newman's conclusion to the introduction opens a space of exchange for the future discussion of political theology (of security) that is concerned with the application and circulation of power.

fn. 26. Scholars writing from the field of political theory most often interpret God's sovereignty as absolute sovereignty, but that is most attributable to ontotheological constructs. Schmitt was not promoting absolute authority or absolutism. As a result, the notion of God imagined as being functional in political theory mirrors ontotheological power in the mold of an absolute ruler. Schmitt has in mind sovereign authority supported and ratified by subjects and acts best in a modern context as a "sovereign dictatorship." Schmitt wrote that an absolute model of sovereignty could no longer stand in modern times. A modern state, including a dictatorship, makes decisions justified as being on behalf of the people. In some works, on political theology, the common ontotheological conception of God is reverse engineered from the idea of absolutism, thereby limiting possible theorizations of authority to particular notions of sovereignty and God.

The applied maxim here is: Theological concepts that have been translated into secular language (Political Theology, 1922). God as sovereign is defined as the most sovereign in terms of the domain in which that power exists and is recognized. Multiple schools of theology have challenged the theological arguments that support ontotheological, unchanging, unmoving, patriarchal Being on which a concept of absolute sovereignty relies. The God-sovereign pair relies on an assumption about God's power which influences interpretations of Schmitt's political theology in secondary literature and limits counter interpretations of sovereign power from a theological point of view. To address these perceived shortcomings, I move from a political theology of the (exclusively) sovereign towards a political theology of security, surveillance, and territory with the help of Foucault's *Security, Territory, and Population* and Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian's *Security Theology, Surveillance, and the Politics of Fear*. Michel Foucault, *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the College de France, 1977-1978*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York, N.Y: Picador/Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian's *Security Theology, Surveillance, and the Politics of Fear* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

fn. 42. And if the narrative of succession is to be upheld, then a dialogue between political theology, biopower, and societies of control seem thwarted from the beginning. But even though Deleuze significantly adds to this perception by using Foucault-like storytelling about socio-historical changes, we may insist on the continued relevance of each form of power, even if they become modified and adaptive. Otherwise, the uneven use of the mechanisms of discipline, punishment, surveillance, totalitarianism, control, and power to come, will be overlooked. These mechanisms may be unmistakable, but they may no longer appear in the same forms, but in combinations or in micropolitics.

After using language such as "cease to be," "succeeded," and "no longer" to tell the story of societal transformation, perhaps unnecessarily and unhelpfully, Deleuze concludes in "Postscript on the Societies of Control," "It may be that older methods, borrowed from the former societies of sovereignty, will return to the fore, but with the necessary modifications." He may have been correct in 1990 when he wrote "we are at something of a beginning of something," but that continues to be true in the post-1990 context. Deleuze's philosophies are philosophies of beginning and becoming. What is always already in the

process of the beginning of something. My insistence on keeping the multiple tools of power analysis in our toolbox, even when they seem like competing or even paradoxical explanations, because bodies are watched and marked by different powers unequally, and forms of power can adapt by assembling (and disassembling) into a mixture of pressure points - an “adaptive assemblage of power.”

fn. 49. Foucault did not analyze these connections, but I will discuss innovations in city planning and infrastructure during the cholera epidemic and the role fire insurance played in the racialized practices of city building in the South End in Boston, MA in my dissertation.

fn. 50. Foucault tried to show the idea of this “policy” and how to apply it; it was the early understanding of police; the police were to address the developing roles of power that state was said to be responsible for.

fn. 52. Life here is not meant to capture the life of flesh and bone. Foucault was not ignorant of zoe, or bare life, in his theorization of bios-politics. I read bios-, as life as practices of managing living, not life force itself, in Foucault. His theories of biopolitics were an attempt to get at the very processes in which life, zoe, or subjectivity was written over, erased, spoken for, distorted, created as something estranged from itself. This is one of the reasons I think Agamben's critique of Foucault in *Homo Sacer* is misplaced.

fn. 55. I diverge somewhat in how Foucault categorizes surveillance and the gaze. Each form of power has its own systems of surveillance. Surveillance was not invented by Bentham, although a new technology and a new mode of watching over. The Panopticon acts as a good physical example of the desire for an “all-seeing” gaze. The all-seeing gaze that Bentham was searching for, and Foucault interpreted as a modern, non-monarchical, gaze could be a theological concept turned into a political one.

fn. 56. There is more to be written about the sparsity of discussion about the role of pastoral power. Confession, his later treatment of Christianity, has more engagement. But pastoral power is largely accepted as an “ancient form of power” Foucault claimed it was. At least it's accepted to be a pre-modern conception of power. I'd be more interested in revisiting it as a form of power than migrating to the concern of Christian charity, almshouses, which became the models of social work and philanthropy which is so central in the biopolitics of homelessness, mental health, and substance use disorder.

fn. 72. Clarke notes “The Quincy Report of 1821” which determined the best arrangement was to have “an almshouse with attached poor farm.” (Clarke, 4) The English Poor Laws restricted movement and further categorized people as: the impotent poor, the able-bodied poor, and the idle poor, the most despised group and were determined undeserving of poor relief. The receipt of aid was tied to a specific location or settlement, under The Poor Relief Act of 1662.

The term workhouse replaced almshouse, reflecting expanding Puritan attitudes. “The Workhouse Test Act of 1723 said that those who wanted to receive relief had to enter a workhouse and undertake a set amount of work. The test was intended to prevent irresponsible claims on parishes. As relief was often only possible inside the workhouse, the real test was whether people would decide to enter the poorhouse or try to somehow continue on their own.” (Clarke, 6).

fn. 76. After the police shooting of Michel Brown, along with the more comprehensive racist police violence against black and brown bodies that occurred in Ferguson, MO, Puar saw “racism as chronic debilitation that posed a challenge to non-disabled/disabled binaries.” She researched ways to link these events to the state conceptually sponsored military strike Operation Protective Edge, “the fifty-one-day Israeli siege of Gaza,” which she closely analyzes as an example of the ongoing “settler colonial occupation” of Palestine state. The stark differences in location, culture, and history were initially a marker of two seemingly separate book projects. However, as she explains, activist networks, collected under “Ferguson to Gaza,” already recognized correlations between the production of settler space in Palestine that mark people of color for injury and the debilitation of black and brown bodies in Missouri by police, as shared demands for justice through transnational solidarities that identify techniques of power in the United States and Israel that debilitate bodies and topologies.

fn. 100. Because, Weheliye explains, they “assume full, self-present, and coherent subjects working against something or someone.. as explanatory tools, these concepts have a tendency to blind us, whether through strenuous denials or exalted celebrations of their existence.” (Weheliye, *H V*, 2).

fn. 108. Biopolitics “deployed through its neoliberal guises” is “an ableist mechanism that debilitates,” what she calls a “capacitation machine” that relies on a dualistic operation of rehabilitation and debilitation of both bodies and infrastructure (xviii). So, for Puar, “Biopolitics...can thus be read as a theory of debility and capacity” (xviii). Capacitation and extraction are a part of the same networked forces that leave bodies in various states of injury and privilege.

Fn.123. Puar adds, “This interplay of territorial and virtual enclosure...complicates the Deleuzian (digital and digitizing) configuration of control societies,” (*R M*, 135).

fn. 125. I argue entering political theology through a conceptualization of territory provides for a theorization of the combined tactics of the suspension of the law and governmentality that mesh in political action around areas of contestation. While I do not position this paper in the vein of new political theology. I think that an approach to the political theology of security identifies multiple vectors of power. Agamben’s theorization of bare life and homo sacer presents challenges for connecting the theoretical work I am exploring in the research, namely Jasbir Puar and Alexander Weheliye. I believe Adam Kotsko recognizes a limitation in the political theology project by attempting to theorize from Schmitt outward. The laws in the United States cannot abide by dual sovereignty. Therefore, shared sovereignty is seldom maintained and becomes dispersed as “coordinated efforts.” The effect of suspending the law and of claiming territory continues to produce (a)effects, but the “will” imparted into decision making, and therefore accountability, becomes diffuse and elusive. Individuality and dualistic paradigms that are embedded in U. S. laws experience intersectionality as a “glitch” to the system. Laws, as they are currently constructed, cannot abide complexity and ambiguity. Definitions in U. S. Ruling Case Laws further describe what is at stake:

“Territorial Jurisdiction. Ruling Case Law Vol XV, 1917, The United States International Law ‘It is conceded that the legislation of every country is territorial; that beyond its own territory, it can only affect its own subjects or citizens. It is not easy to conceive a power to execute a municipal law, or to enforce obedience to that law without the circle in which that law operates. A power to seize for the infraction of a law is derived from the sovereign, and must be exercised, it would seem, within those limits which circumscribe the sovereign power. . . A seizure of a person not a subject, or of a vessel not belonging to a subject, made on the high seas, for the breach of a municipal regulation, is an act which the sovereign cannot authorize.’”

fn. 128. I want to be careful using Shalhoub-Kevorkian’s security theology lens. I do not want to conflate the tactics of the Israeli government and military with Jewish people, Jewish faith, nor as the representative of Israelis living within and without Israel. At the same time, I try not to distort or dampen the sharp critique Shalhoub-Kevorkian offers by intentionally engaging uniquely theological insights (as opposed to remaining a critique of secular ideology or political philosophy).

fn. 129. I focus on how the home and house play a role in these fields of physical spatial violence and affective psychosocial trauma. Feminist theologies and relational ontologies, new materialism, posthuman theories, disability studies, crip theory, and queer theory offer rich resources for thinking about the body beyond the limits of an individual’s skin. The home and its association with domestic space has a complicated story to tell. I do not assume the home to be either or unsafe but has the capacity for both.

fn. 132. Shalhoub-Kevorkian’s reading of the use of seemingly neutral or mundane tools helps form more questions around the use of the Public Works department garbage trucks during “sweeps” of people and property who are forced to relocate within minutes. (More should be said about the affective intensities that garbage trucks introduce into an event such as Operation Clean Sweep in Boston, but that is currently beyond the scope of this paper - I do plan to discuss it in more detail in interlude three).

Operation Clean Sweep advertises Boston's militaristic-public works framework in its title, but garbage trucks remain largely outside the framework of political critique. Cleaning up is conceived of as a public good, a responsibility of the government to promote a "quality of life" for its residents. We assume trash is neutral, easily identifiable, and a social problem. I will return to this line of critique in another location in my dissertation.

fn. 145. In his reportedly last interview conducted on May 29, 1984, Gilles Barbedette and Andre Scala pose the question to Foucault concerning his four volume project *The History of Sexuality*, "Insofar as you do not affirm any universal truth but raise paradoxes in thought and make of philosophy a permanent question, are you a skeptic?" Foucault replies: "Absolutely. The only thing that I will not accept in the program of the skeptics is the attempt made."

i. Health and Safety: Sovereign Securing Borders

Recourse to human rights is an inadequate defense against the sovereign power to draw, redraw, and police boundaries. Those identified as being out of place are drawn outside the bounds of the protection of enforceable human rights. Human rights legal scholar Galina Cornelisse's essay, "Immigration Detention and the Territoriality of Universal Rights," included in *The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the Freedom of Movement* highlights the example of The IFMSA (International Federation of Medical Students Associations) Policy Statement on Access to Health Care for Undocumented Persons ; which states, "Governments have the right to exercise authority over their borders." This statement confirms Cornelisse's argument that state sovereignty based on territorialization is naturalized and embedded in international law, which weakens the discourse on human rights. Cornelisse argues, "sovereignty in international law does not only entail exclusive authority over clearly demarcated territory but in practice assigns each and every state with the responsibility over a distinct, territorially defined population." (104) The state has the power to control individuals and groups within that territory. Therefore, universal human rights often fail to cross those borders. Nicholas De Genova and Nathalie Peutz, eds. Duke U. Press, 2010, 101-122

[https://ifmsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/SecGen\\_2014AM\\_PS\\_Access\\_to\\_Health\\_Care\\_for\\_Undocumented\\_Persons.pdf](https://ifmsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/SecGen_2014AM_PS_Access_to_Health_Care_for_Undocumented_Persons.pdf)

Hannah Arendt's political theory on statelessness provides a rich theoretical grounding for the precarity of living in-between borders in a no-zone. (See also Agamben)

ii. Territorialization

Concisely defined, territoriality is "a concept that links political power with clearly demarcated territory." (101) She continues, "More specifically, I argue that immigration detention is a form of state violence that has become so deeply embedded within the dominant understanding of the sovereign state and the global territorial structure of states that it has remained insulated against the usual forms of legal correction and political control." (105) For Cornelisse, territoriality as a structure leads to the destruction of individual's protection of their human rights,

Embedded in the definition of the state's maintenance of borders, deportation and detention are seen as natural and, therefore, largely unquestionable. Criticism primarily focuses on the procedures or facilities related to detention, while the naturalness of deportation and detention remains unquestioned. Deportation and detention seem natural because the system relies on and reifies a structure that establishes states sovereignty on territoriality, a concept assumed to be a necessary organization of world politics. Cornelisse writes, "In official political discourse, [deportation and detention] are presented as the proper and natural response of the sovereign state to those who have violated its territorial sovereignty." (101) Detention, in this system, becomes the presumed action taken for those crossing states' borders.

Cornelisse shows that the system of state territoriality reinforces the punishment and detention of immigrants.

Similarly, the system of jurisdictions and business improvement zones reinforce procedures for “dealing with” internal migrants, those bodies that have effectively and affectively “trespassed” into an inner sovereign territory, where territory is no longer public or private but shared between governmentality and neoliberal economic policies, including non-profit funding networks.

Cornelisse concludes, “Inefficacious immigration law enforcement thus fuels the perception in which migration forms a threat to a territorial ideal that must be maintained at any cost, a mechanism that is in fact indispensable for, and arguably even orchestrated by, governments that want to sustain the perceived naturalness of the ‘nation-state space.’” (104) Cornelisse’s case can find similar tactics, though not identical, at the level of neighborhoods.

For Cornelisse, territorialization has deleterious effects on human rights. As a result of the territorialization of state power, she concludes, the “modern discourse of human rights has not been able to live up to its universal aspirations.” (104) Cornelisse explains, “This is so because the very language that the international legal discourse reserves for issues bearing on territorial sovereignty is the language of the sovereign state alone and thus leaves the individual interests that are implicated in these issues invisible and inarticulate.” (103)

Membership in the “human race became inextricably linked to national citizenship. In practice, people enjoyed protection of their fundamental rights on account of their membership in their territorial state instead of by reason of their humanity.” (109)

### iii. Statelessness and Human Rights

In actuality, states are required to protect and enforce human rights. And states, in turn, determine the reach of international human rights. The stateless were exceptions to the system of laws and rights. Similarly, those in detention, that space situated between inside and outside the country, are exceptions to rights. Located outside the legal system resulted in the stripping of rights.

Cornelisse concludes that, in some ways, individuals would be in a better situation if the system was more criminalized. She does not mean criminalization as in the public discourse that labels and stereotypes migrants as “criminal alien” and “illegal.” Here she implies the criminalization of the system makes it subject to the law, and therefore, a person is afforded all the rights therein. As the system is now, detainees are not held for criminal offenses and do not acquire any rights as citizens accused of a crime, such as guaranteed legal representation, a hearing in front of a judiciary board, a timely decision on sentence, appeal rights, etc. Detention procedures are determined by individual officials in the ICE rather than the court system. The operations continue to be arbitrary and secretive in most cases.

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt writes about the production of stateless people between, during, and after the World Wars and the resultant lack of protection. A person’s detachment from a nation-state leaves them without a state to grant them human rights. For Arendt, the loss of national rights meant the loss of human rights. The parallels between stateless people and the individuals held in United States detention centers should be noted. (299) Stateless people – Jews, Trotskyites, etc. – were unprotected and subject to totalitarian governmental influences. Arendt gives an example: “The official SS newspaper, the *Schwarze Korps*, stated explicitly in 1938 that if the world was not yet convinced that the Jews were the scum of the earth, it soon would be when unidentifiable beggars, without nationality, without money, and without passports crossed their frontiers.” (269) The lack of national protection became “evidence” that the “scum of the earth” was in fact “less than human.” In actuality, Arendt notes, “human rights” reflected “hopeless idealism” and did not function to protect the victims from their oppressors, nor did “human rights” initiate urgent and assertive action from onlookers.

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 299.

### iv. Exceptional, Ambiguous, Arbitrary-by-reason-of-affect (on a whim)



The term exception is often used when describing the state of those subject to detention. They do not fit in the framework of law and are, therefore, an exception. As an exception, they are subject to police and enforcement rather than the judicial system. They are an anomaly that needs to fit clear procedures. This leaves them vulnerable to ambiguous processes.

One of Arendt's claims in *The Origin of Totalitarianism* runs strikingly parallel to the situation lived by migrants held in detention. She writes,

"The best criterion by which to decide whether someone has been forced outside the pale of the law is to ask if he [sic] would benefit by committing a crime.... Only as an offender of the law can he gain protection from it. as long as his trial and his sentence last, he will be safe from the arbitrary police rule against which there are no lawyers and no appeals....He is no longer the scum of the earth but important enough to be informed of all the details of the law under which he will be tried. He has become a respectable person."

Here Arendt addresses the brutal consequences of ambiguous systems. Several scholars, particularly those addressing human rights and international law violations, point to the ambiguity that defines the detention system in the United States and other Western countries. Daniel Wilsher, in a chapter titled "International Law and Immigration Detention: Between Territorial Sovereignty and Emerging Human Rights Norms," notes, "During the 1970s the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families had been drafted under United Nations sponsorship. Whilst it only confers a right of free movement within a state upon regular migrants, both regular and irregular migrants have a right not to be subject to arbitrary detention." (Wilsher, *Immigration Detention*, 122.) Once an immigrant is determined to be an 'enemy,' their rights no longer apply. Wilsher says,

The modern proliferation of barriers through visas, criminal penalties, databases, detention, deportation and even naval interception, suggest an 'enemy' to be repelled. The political climate and domestic legal tools have created 'irregular' or 'unauthorized' migrants – persons who are deemed to be inherently illegitimate. For states to 'respect' the 'rights' of those who are not supposed to be present, would legitimate persons who have been politically de-legitimated.

The rights of individuals were shown to be susceptible to a sovereign state. As citizens and people of faith, we are complicit in a political system where nation-state sovereignty essentially goes unquestioned even when individual rights are violated. The detention system functions in secrecy and relies on public acceptance and even reliance on these measures of immigration "control" and deterrence. Religious communities are responsible for challenging sovereignty that goes against God's sovereignty of love and life affirmation.

## INTERLUDE TWO CONTENT NOTES

- i. I am not suggesting a vague sentiment that the past influences the present, I am interested in how the past in the present is (un)recognized or (un)recognizable and "present" in spite of the past(s) being unspoken or unrepresentable. This interlude does not offer a retelling of encounters I have experienced, but there are scenarios that influence the motivation for this chapter's themes. If I could narrow them down, they would include working on an outreach/medical van that spatially acts as a mobile corridor and working in an office situated inside a building that housed temporary residences with a layout roughly of approximately 11 rooms and 2 points of egress coming off of a spine-corridor creating 13 physical thresholds at its simplest definition.
- ii. Questions abound: How does the way I inhabit space influence my relationship to authority, the authority I have collected, the authority I have been granted, or the authority I am subject to? How does the structure of a space influence how I inhabit that space and further influence how I participate in relational events? I do not have mastery over a space, yet I may assume a position as

a structural figure—performing roles that participate in either the maintenance or dissolution of order? What types of encounters are encouraged? And how does a shelter become a meeting point between worlds? Does a particular shelter perform differently with each person who passes through its door and down its corridors? How is one shelter different from another shelter? Why does that matter? How do feelings and intuition of a space come under question or questionable through the arrangement of bodies in space along with the objects and materials that arrange interactions?

- iii. A rhetorical reference to a shelter is not the thing itself. Therefore, politicians can describe a place without it having a resemblance to the experience of a place. Such idealized pronouncements (as the ones below) also mark a particular point in the design process, its visioning which is often entangled with its economic or political justification. Simple narratives of place are often presented at openings and dedications; opening remarks at a groundbreaking relay a vision for a place - it is not the thing/dwelling (noun and verb) itself. However, discourse is not wholly separate from the experience of a place, but it is different. The experience of a place is difficult to capture and activate in public discourse in quite the same way as announcements of plans and visions.

**Thursday, June 25, 2016,**

"This project [112 Southampton Shelter] is a testament to what can be established when we work together to tackle our City's biggest challenges," said Mayor Walsh. "This is not just a shelter - but a front door to counseling, support and permanent housing. It is a critical part of our strategy to end veteran homelessness this year, and chronic homelessness by 2018. Together, we can make Boston a city where no one is left behind- no matter your income, your past, your struggles." "The renovated building, completed in fewer than six months, will provide space for both the emergency shelter as well as two of the city's transitional housing programs, Project SOAR and Safe Harbor. Reopening this shelter and the transitional beds restores the services that the city offered before the Long Island Bridge closure. Temporary shelter beds located at the South End Fitness Center, Boston Rescue Mission and Boston's Health Care for the Homeless that have been operating since October, were closed this week." Thursday June 25, 2016. <https://www.boston.gov/news/mayor-walsh-celebrates-opening-new-homeless-shelter-will-support-pathways-permanent-housing>

**"Welcome" Becomes Temporary and Relocatable**

On the city of Boston's official website is the following description of the relocated program:

"The Engagement Center is "A welcoming space for individuals receiving services in the Newmarket Square neighborhood." . . . "Opened in August 2017, the Engagement Center (EC) is a welcoming, low-threshold daytime space for individuals navigating homelessness and substance use near the intersection of Melnea Cass and Mass Ave."

Previously, similar services were offered in a large tent that the city had put up on the same block. Many of those seeking services at the center had lived in the large homeless tent encampment on the nearby streets that the Wu administration dismantled in January.

*Timeline*

**August 2017** The Engagement Center (EC) Opened in the area labeled Mass and Cass

In **December 2021**, the EC moved into a new building at 26 Atkinson Street.

In **May 2022**—WBUR reported “Although it’s been open for just a few months, Boston’s Engagement Center in the so-called “Mass. and Cass” area of the city will now be operating on a limited basis, according to Mayor Michelle Wu.

Did not change by itself, it was part of other infrastructural changes that include:

In the latest move to address rising violence and entrenched drug problems in the “Mass. and Cass” section of Boston, Mayor Michelle Wu said she will seek to give law enforcement more authority to remove tents, and the city will add new temporary shelter beds.

“Wu’s longer-term plan includes a multi-million-dollar bid to restore addiction and homeless services on Long Island, in Boston Harbor.

**August 25, 2023**—Wu’s plan also involves closing the city’s “Engagement Center” on Atkinson Street and moving its services to Boston Public Health Commission offices on Massachusetts Avenue. . . . the City plans to open 30 temporary, transitional beds at the Boston Public Health Commission’s campus at 727 Massachusetts Avenue. . . . Security will be stationed inside and outside the temporary site on a 24/7 basis.

<https://www.boston.gov/news/city-ordinance-and-other-measures-respond-mass-and-cass-crisis-announced>

<https://www.wbur.org/news/2022/05/09/michelle-wu-mass-cass-engagement-center>

<https://www.wbur.org/news/2023/08/25/mass-cass-boston-mayor-wu-addiction-opioid-crisis>

iv. Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa, and Murray Silverstein of the Center for Environmental Structure wrote a highly influential book published in 1977 called *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*. The book is the second in a three-part series, although it was the first part published. Christopher Alexander published part one, the philosophical argument for a pattern language, titled *A Timeless Way of Building* in 1979. Volume two provides some of the concrete handling of designing and construction of space.

I do not suggest the room can be directly “read” Architecture is not frozen into the building structure. Of course, buildings and spaces shift, adapt, and change, and many design justice practices activate the potential for adapting, modifying, and disidentifying with a building’s intended program. Program here has two meanings: (1) Program is an architectural term for the intended use of a space that informs its design. (2) Program is the term widely used in social work to mean a designed practice typically administered by an organization’s staff. For new design or reconstruction, an architect would consider the intended use of a space, or its program. The program is often a client-architect project. The client communicates the space’s intended use to the designer.

v. Feeling Good/Doing Good

*In itself*, “feeling good” should not be turned into a marker of dubious character or covert malevolence. To do so interprets people through a binary of friend-enemy. Critique is necessary, but oversimplification is tempting in a progressive framework. The study of power and privilege that is attached to architectures of care and control does not have the goal of stopping building affordable housing, providing necessary relief, and extending rights to people experiencing poverty, housing precarity, and homelessness. Meanie Loehwing writes “The limitations...should give us pause but not pessimism when it comes to the democratic potential of unconventional advocacy models in the context of the fight against homelessness and with regard to the wide range of social justice issues animating contemporary advocates. . . . we are fortunately not forced to decide between wholesale acceptance or rejection of either

conventional or unconventional approaches.” It is disingenuous to superficially critique philanthropy too broadly while we also apply for grants, accept foundation donations for community engagement projects, benefit from philanthropic support through scholarly projects, or rely on donations to supply nonprofit resources. “Charity and philanthropy provided a means to spread convictions, uphold existing institutions, and assert the bond between giver and receiver.” 386 Melanie Loehwing, *Homeless Advocacy and the Rhetorical Construction of the Civic Home* (2018), 163.

## CHAPTER FOUR CONTENT NOTES

### i. The Concept of Neighbor

In modern contexts, "neighbor" permeates a wide array of domains, spanning scholarly exploration and popular usage. It influences policies like the Good Neighbor Policy, community initiatives such as Neighborhood Watch Programs, property concerns seen in NIMBYism (Not-In-My-Back-Yard), and even commercial sentiments echoed in phrases such as "Like a Good Neighbor." Consequently, the concept of neighbor has thus become overloaded, possessing multifaceted associations that, at times, become superficial interpretations, rendering it a somewhat questionable starting point for ethical investigations. Amidst this densely populated semiotic landscape, one might ask: what more can we uncover about the concept of the neighbor? And how might such insights illuminate our understanding of the possible relationships between theopoetics, architecture, and homelessness— between world-creating, world-making, and world-shattering? And how it might shed light on our relatedness itself?

Beneath the colloquial use of "neighbor" lies an innate question with the potential to significantly shape ethical behavior. It subtly yet profoundly asks, "How do we envision peaceful coexistence with others?" "Neighbor" bridges theological reflections on communal living with secular ethics centered on dense and proximate habitation. Has further implications for dwelling, belonging, and connecting. In this exploration, the study of the neighbor offers a promising avenue for understanding how theopoetics, architecture, and homelessness interweave in the broader fabric of human experience and ethical contemplation.

The anchoring thematic figure becomes the neighbor., or more accurately—as its active gerund—*neighboring*. Specifically, this chapter discusses the event of the encounter and its pre-arrival constructions in order to build upon discourses about neighbor identity.

fn. 1 The quote incorporates a multiple of processes that are inseparable, yet associated with different forces, bodies, and objects. Breaking it down helps recognize how complicated as the “feeling of place” can be. The quote incorporates multiple processes that are inseparable, yet associated with different forces, bodies, and objects. Breaking it down helps recognize how complicated as the “feeling of place” can be.

To ‘co-incide’  
Different things happen at the same moment.  
A happening that brings things near to other things.  
The nearness shapes the shape of each thing.  
Not necessarily a matter of chance  
Arrivals are, in a certain way, determined.  
A determination that might determine what gets near  
Once we are near

fn. 5. This includes the orientation of subjects and objects, the lines of force, and the multiplicity of perceived realities within a singular site. The aim here is not to efface subjectivity or identity but to

underscore the diverse forces that coalesce in the becoming of a grounded event specific to the alchemy of proximity.

Viewing the neighbor involves seeing them not merely as a fixed subject position but rather as a dynamic event of encounter. This includes the orientation of subjects and objects, the lines of force, and the multiplicity of perceived realities within a singular site. The aim here is not to efface subjectivity or identity but to underscore the diverse forces that coalesce in the becoming of a grounded event specific to the alchemy of proximity.

fn. 9. Foucault's research during the 1960s and 1970s is primarily anchored in the histories of epistemologies and the broad mechanisms of power impacting groups, even entire populations. While Foucault acknowledges the influence of these systems on individual lives, he devotes limited theoretical space to the subject's experience beyond systems of power; he chooses to focus on *pouvoir*, biopolitics, and *anatamopolitics* rather than *puissance*, *zoe*, or poetics. It's not until his subsequent works, which delve into the hermeneutics of the subject more intently, that he grants significant attention to the personal scale—"care of the self."

I do not wish to overstate where "the subject" appears in Foucault's work. In *Mad for Foucault*, Lynn Huffer writes, "I argue that Foucault was always asking about ethics because, from "madness" to "ethics," he was always asking about the subject and the other; he was always, from the start, trying to find a way out from under those modes of subjectivation that keep us, and others, unfree.

Foucault's use of the term *anatamopolitics* functions to distinguish between power that touches, manipulates, and marks flesh and bone, such as corporal punishment or branding.

fn. 14. From the perspective of the politics of homelessness, Willse explains, "A home is nonetheless embedded in the built form of the house and its neighborhood, both of which exert structural force, another affective materiality that enmeshes with the symbolic." He connects housing to the structure of home by saying, "Housing" . . . these congealments of forces that mold and modulate bodies, individuals, and collectivities, are situated as well in a larger technical system for sorting and managing populations." He continues, "A house or a home is an extraction of the political economic, and social forces that swirl around inside the system." "...a house is a technology for the organization and distribution of life, health, illness, and death." Willse, *The Value of Homelessness*, 1-2.

fn. 17. This question recalls Elaine Scarry's exploration of pain in *The Body in Pain*. Notably, the idiosyncratic and often elusive nature of sensations such as pleasure and pain suggest how fully mutual or wholly communicable interactions between a human or nonhuman affecter and affected remain elusive. See Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, 1987.

"It is the intense pain that destroys a person's self and world, a destruction experienced spatially as either the contraction of the universe down to the immediate vicinity of the body or as the body swelling to fill the entire universe." Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, Princeton University Press, (2013) 15. "How one walks through the world, the endless small adjustments of balance, is affected by the shifting weights of beautiful things."

fn. 37. Douglas writes, "If we had to choose an index of solidarity from the time-space structure of homes, the strongest indicator would not be stoutness of the enclosing walls but the complexity of coordination. Complexity is more surprising than simplicity or confusion." She continues,

fn. 47. Ahmed explains, "In some ways, then, *Strange Encounters* is the story of my own encounters as a particular, located subject who both dwells and travels in certain places, and who has access to forms of 'nomadic global citizenship' (see Chapter 4) that enable some movements and disallow others."

fn. 59. “At one level, we can think of this relationship as determined by that which must already have taken place to allow the particular encounter to take place, that is, the social processes that are at stake in the coming together of (at least) two subjects. However, this would presuppose that the particular is an outcome of the general, and would assume that both are already determined at different times and places. I want to consider how the particular encounter both informs and is informed by the general: encounters between embodied subjects always hesitate between the domain of the particular – the face to face of this encounter – and the general – the framing of the encounter by broader relationships of power and antagonism. The particular encounter hence always carries traces of those broader relationships. Differences, as markers of power, are not determined in the ‘space’ of the particular or the general, but in the very determination of their historical relation (a determination that is never final or complete, as it involves strange encounters).” 8-9.

fn. 62. Ahmed’s *Levinas Critique* in *Strange Encounters* includes the following quotes:

“However, as I will argue throughout the book, the problems implicit in discourses such as ‘stranger danger’ – where it is assumed that being a stranger is a matter of inhabiting a certain body – are not resolved by simply welcoming ‘the stranger’.” 4 “I suggest that it is the processes of expelling or welcoming the one who is recognised as a stranger that produce the figure of the stranger in the first place.” 4 “However, in *Strange Encounters* this idea that we should simply love the stranger as a basis for an ethics of alterity (see Chapter 7), or a non-universalist form of political activism (see Chapter 8), is questioned. While such theoretical moves may challenge the discourse of ‘stranger danger’ by refusing to recognise the stranger as dangerous, they also take for granted the stranger’s status as a figure that contains or has meaning. It is this very granting of figurability that functions to conceal the histories of determination which were already concealed in the discourses of stranger danger.” 4 This is not necessarily incompatible but requires articulations of the “asymmetry of power.” (Evans, 8)

fn. 99. Evans makes an important clarification: “It hardly needs to be said that giving architecture this kind of consequentiality would not entail the reinstatement of functionality of behavioral determinism. Certainly, it would be foolish to suggest that there is anything in a place which could compel people to behave in a specified way towards one another, enforcing a day-to-day regime of gregarious sensuality. It would be still more foolish, however, to suggest that a plan could not prevent people from behaving in a particular way, or at least hinder them from doing so.”

#### i. Proximity & Intimacy

Proximity, devoid of inherent moral essence, can manifest both positively and negatively, influencing intimate exchange and transmuting teaming potential into intricate entanglements. Intimacy exceeds sex, attraction, or familiarity; it encompasses arenas where personal, societal, and spatial boundaries blur ambiguously. In Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman’s discussion in *Sex, or the Unbearable*, intimacy becomes construed through the conceptualization of “sex” as a site of unbearable failure and ecstatic elicitation. Ecstasy conjures the Greek word *ekstasis*– “to stand outside oneself.” “Sex” signifies overflow, an excess. Berlant and Edelman probe intimacies that go beyond conventional notions of sex. Yet, they “both see sex as a site for experiencing this intensified encounter with what disorganizes accustomed ways of being.” (11) Therefore, proximity and intimacy can be understood as overlapping perspectives on these amplified interactions, which are, in part, heightened by physical constructs and material assemblies.

Certain psychologists refer to personal space as proxemics, typically depicted as a diagram with concentric circles and average diameters, often construed as a protective bubble enveloping the body. However, I remain hesitant to rely solely on such diagrammatic representations that seek to determine or generalize the personal space across human bodies. Proxemics carries specific understandings of the self and the mind-body relationship from psychology—concepts that I aim to disrupt, not discredit, by leveraging Sara Ahmed’s theory of public affects.

While the initial research in proxemics is nuanced, the ideas tend to become simplified and reductive in the course of widespread distribution via body diagrams. For instance, a frequently reproduced

diagram from proxemics studies features the "average" human form surrounded by an 18-inch radius (an estimated average) of personal space. This diagram can then be integrated into architectural blueprints to rationalize decisions concerning space allocation within a building—often weighed against cost-effectiveness. The associated average measurements serve to standardize bodily boundaries, and it suffers from the same issues plaguing other forms of representation, primarily the risk of mistranslation when applied to architecture, a field that often employs measurement in a more generalizable manner.

In considering the architectural aspects of proximal intimacies, the closest analogy can be found in Berlant's discussion of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work in "White Glasses," where intimacy is presented as a matter of "co-spatiality and not predictability, recognition, or exchange."<sup>49</sup>

The spatiality of coexistence is a realm of "encountering the impossible-to-distinguish relation between attaching and destroying and between building a world and annihilating what is inconvenient to it, including herself." 49-50.

The use of ecstasy conjures the Greek word *ekstasis* in mind—to mean "to stand outside oneself."

[https://www.thelivingphilosophy.com/ecstasis-and-catharsis/#:~:text=The%20Greek%20term%20ecstasis%20\(meaning,of%20total%20immersion%20in%20being.](https://www.thelivingphilosophy.com/ecstasis-and-catharsis/#:~:text=The%20Greek%20term%20ecstasis%20(meaning,of%20total%20immersion%20in%20being.)

"Sex" in quotations denotes their deliberate ambiguity—acknowledging their incongruences can be generative. I am attempting to include sex itself in conceptualization of the complicated potential in proximity/intimacy. I am thinking about proximity and intimacy as location and interaction. In the home and the family, sex is a part of the excess -- in pleasure and pain.

## ii. Interiors and Interiority

In "The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism," architectural historian and theorist Beatriz Colomina interrogates the function of "comfort" in the building and maintenance of the home by pointing to power dynamics within spaces within spaces within homes. Comfort might be thought of as a characteristic of home, but that outcome depends on a series of negotiated movements and spaces within the home that are differently felt. "Comfort in this space," Colomina states, "is related to both intimacy and control." (76) In a study of architect Adolf Loos' Müller house, Colomina identifies the raised "lady's room (Zimmer der Dame)" to be like a "theater box" suspended above the social spaces and centered in the heart of the home. She observes: "Suspended in the middle of the house, this space assumes both the character of a 'sacred' space and a point of control. Comfort is paradoxically produced by two seemingly opposing conditions, intimacy and control." (79) (Here, "sacred" space is imagined possessing characteristics of privacy and protection.) Colomina draws a distinction between an idea of interiority or privacy that imagines the home to be the interior and protection against the forces of the exterior. She troubles the interior/exterior, private/public binaries by showing how the interior and exterior are a series of foldings or invaginations. Interior- interiority (I suggest the term to connect architecture with subjectivity at the threshold of intimacy) is subject to interior-exteriority (external control) and carries it further. Intimacy becomes a condition of control, and control a condition of intimacy. They no longer appear as two opposing forces that belong to the spheres of interior and exterior, private and public. What might the implications be for images of guest and host that positions one as interior and the other as exterior? One as a figure of stasis and the other as a figure of movement?

While tracing the drawings and photographs of the Müller house, Colomina interprets the Zimmer der Dame, the "theater box," positioned at the entrance to the social spaces but removed from direct access, sitting among the upper rooms where "sexuality is hidden away." Colomina describes this as the "intersection of the visible and the invisible, women are placed as the guardians of the unspeakable." (Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture and Mass Media*, MIT Press, 1994, 248). Colomina's reading of the spaces in the house shows how object and subject can switch places in a moment of looking—where the viewer, from inside the theater box, framed by the "lady's room," becomes viewed

by, in Colomina's words, the "intruder" or the "voyeur" upon entering. The raised, private room looking over the social areas on the first floor, were in a position of safety due to the privilege of oversight and protection, now is in a room that cannot be escaped without being seen and captured by the gaze; (In reference to the gaze, Colomina quotes Lacan, "From the moment this gaze exists, I am already something other, in that I feel myself becoming an object for the gaze of others. But in this position, which is a reciprocal one, others also know that I am an object who knows himself to be seen." (S & S, 83) "It is impossible to abandon the space, let alone leave the house, without being seen by those over whom control is being exerted." *P and P*, 250

iii. Home is not . . . Oikos.

Thomas Barrie, a practicing architect and professor of architecture, writes about the impact of cultural beliefs and social values on architectural history. His scholarly work occupies the juncture of religion and architecture, engaging in interdisciplinary conversations with philosophers and theologians about matters related to sacred space and architecture. In my introductory chapter, I discussed how his work both resonates with and diverges from the focus of this dissertation. For example,. I share Barrie's interest in seeking s "alternative histories of architecture" and belief systems' roles in the built environment. He wrote *House and Home* after writing *The Sacred In-Between* and co-editing *Architecture, Culture, and Spirituality*. *Remind me if you are in touch with him....?*

In his book *House and Home*, Barrie acknowledges his intellectual debt to "ontological phenomenology," even though he aims to "avoid its more universalizing schools of thought." However, the sources he engages make this goal challenging. Barrie concurs with Henri Lefebvre's evaluation that:

[T]he domestic, especially in the hands of Gaston Bachelard and Martin Heidegger, often 'passes everywhere for a special, still sacred, quasi-religious and in fact absolute space,' where totalizing pronouncements insure it to critical analysis. For example, traditional concepts of house and home, such as 'center of the world' and 'model of the cosmos', though easily identifiable, are changeable. (Thomas Barrie, *House and Home*, xxiv).

While recognizing the diverse ontological interpretations of "home" across cultures, Barrie's primary interest lies in the ontological perspective. While I do not disregard this perspective, I deliberately choose not to begin my work with it. As an illustration, below is an example of Barrie's exploration of home's obverse—"homelessness as an ontological state" — in his chapter "Homelessness and Homecoming."

[H]ouse and home may be mere shelter but can also embody a sense of being in the world and express understandings of the world and, in doing so, facilitate a homecoming to the world. And, if homecoming is something attained, then its obverse, homelessness, is what is experienced when one is without home. Barrie, 3.

He continues by citing passages from Plato, Vitruvius, Freud, Heidegger, Harries, and various religious texts to bolster his argument. Barrie highlights Plato's belief that humans are "trapped in the sensible world and human existence as one of exile and imprisonment in incarnate life." In the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is often illustrated that humans are characterized as being lost, wandering, and yearning for a connection with an elusive God. This dislocation is evocatively described in *Genesis* as the lost Eden. . ." (Barrie, 3)

'Uncanny homelessness' (*unheimlich*) was the condition of estrangement from the familiar, provoking a mood of homesickness. Sigmund Freud described it as fear and dread resulting from estrangement where the familiar has become strange. . . . In some cases, the condition of homelessness can be redemptive. World mythology contains a panoply of stories regarding hero-redeemer figures and the necessity of leaving home to gain insights and benefits for others."<sup>(4)</sup> . . . Karsten Harries argues, "Architecture has a special and perhaps preeminent role, which 'answers to the human need to experience the social and natural world as a non-arbitrary meaningful order.'<sup>(6)</sup> . . . Vitruvius, in his observations on the origin of the dwelling house, states that it was the unique human capacity to stand 'upright and gazing



upon the splendor of the starry firmament,' to realize and consider their place in the universe, that was, in part, the impetus for the birth of architecture. ...Consequently, humans have demanded that architecture not only shelter them from the storms of the environment but the storms of existence as well. <sup>(4)</sup>

These lengthy quotes help to demonstrate Barrie's approach to the topic. Barrie examines an overlooked area in academic research, which concerns the symbolism, meaning, ritual use, cultural importance, and ontological functions of the concept of "home," which he aims to address. <sup>(xxi)</sup> As a result, although Barrie does include moments of political commentary, he admits he "is not overly reliant on, socio-political, gendered, and psychological analysis of domesticity for its argument." <sup>(xxv)</sup>

Barrie identifies a gap in the architectural scholarship that explores the "symbolism, meaning, ritual use, cultural significance, and ontological roles of home," a gap which he seeks to address. <sup>(xxi)</sup> While Barrie adeptly compiles an abundance of definitions and descriptions of house and home and include the etymologically of house, home, and habitat, there lacks significant grounding in material conditions. (For example, Barrie includes: ham (Anglo Saxon), Heima (Old Norse), hejm (Dutch), heim (German), domus (Latin), domos (Greek meaning house) oikos (Greek, meaning home) among other roots in a list of terms. <sup>xxi</sup>).

Mary Douglas questions the idea of a home being a site of intrinsic solidarity the "mysterious supply of loyal support" in "The Idea of Home: A Kind of Space" in *Home*, 1993.

In this chapter, *home is not. . . a virtue*. It is not synonymous with security, solitude, or solidarity. *Home is not. . . allegorical*. I will not discuss the ascetic's hut, the writer's retreat, the recluse's cave, Heidegger's Black Forest hut, or Henry David Thoreau's cabin on Walden Pond. The house and home visions of modern architects such as Loos, Gropius, Wright, and Le Corbusier are not standards to measure others against. *Home is not. . . a medium*. It is not, as Barrie describes, "a medium of ontological and spiritual orientations that otherwise would not find full expression." <sup>(90)</sup> *Home is not. . . existential*. It does not reflect Novalis' saying that "Philosophy is essentially homesickness – the universal impulse to be home." Stanley Cavell, *Home*, 5). Home is not . . . *poetic or metaphorical*.

Robert Frost conveys his views of the masculine/feminine binary in his response in "The Death of the Hired Man" response to the statement: "It all depends on what you mean by home." First comes the husband's response: "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in." Then comes the wife's rejoinder, "I should have called it something you somehow have not to deserve." (John Hollander, 27). Home is defined differently in terms of earned rights and responsibility, which Frost claims to be "the masculine," and natural rights and hospitality which Frost imagines to be "the feminine." It is the "human point of ultimate return." <sup>(28-29)</sup>

It's significant Virginia Woolf imagined a room inside of a home rather than a home unto itself, doing situates her story in the complexity of the home. Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Penguin Pocket Hardbacks. Harlow, England: Penguin Books, 2004 (1929).

Venturi emancipatory project from modernism's "puritanically moral language of orthodox modern architecture." 121

#### iv. Home is not. . . a legal domicile.

'Domicile' is defined by Black's Law Dictionary as 'The place where a man has his true, fixed, and permanent home and principal establishment, and to which whenever he is absent he has the intention of returning. . . the permanent residence of a person or the place to which he intends to return though he may reside elsewhere.' This intention to return – perhaps marked by possessions left at a residence with intent to return to them – is crucial to the legal notion of *necessary domicile*, 'that kind of domicile which exists by operation of law, as distinguished from *voluntary domicile* or *domicile of choice*.' In other words, 'Home is the place where, for its jurisdiction/A court says where you are from.' The domicile of choice alluded to is what we construe a home to be: 'Home is the place where, when you want to stay there/They

have to say you are.' For the law, necessary domicile can frequently prevail over domicile of choice. . . (30-31)

Home is not institutionally framed as “*matrimonial domicile*, ‘Wherever either one may be, home’s where/The marriage always is. . .’” Finally, neither is it the *domicile of origin*, “defined by ‘the home of the parents,’ or ‘Home is the place which you were born into...’”<sup>(31)</sup> If home is not primarily allegorical, involving ascetic huts, writer's retreats, or iconic architects' visions; if it is not a medium for self-expression, nor an existential impulse for return; if 'home' extends beyond poetic metaphors, such as Frost's dichotomous interpretation, and is not simply a legal residence but rather a jurisdictional notion intertwined with marriage and origin—then what does 'home' represent in terms of its existential meaning and its relation to an architecture? Does scale, site, and place represent a different category, sometimes regulated to “house”? But that would suggest a false dichotomy and exclude the presence of home in the meaning of house and house in the meaning of home. The blurred boundaries between home and house speak to the blurriness of home and by extension its “lack” assumed by “homelessness.” One avenue for walking on that blurred line is to search for the shared domains of home’s relational and existential qualities and its spatial, physical, and social architectures.

#### v. The Problem with Phenomenology

In her book *Architecture in Abjection: Bodies, Spaces, and Their Relations*, architect Zuzana Kovar argues the problems inherent to phenomenology are more drastic when compared to Ahmed’s approach to queering phenomenology.

But while phenomenology, being dualistic, provides for a sufficient account of our engagement with space, its key shortcoming within architecture is that it is a static notion of things. It, therefore, is incapable of addressing transitions and exchanges not only between bodies and spaces, but within the bodies and spaces themselves.<sup>(2)</sup>

Zuzana Kovar, PhD, *Architecture in Abjection: Bodies, Spaces, and Their Relations*, New York: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2018.

Phenomenology, while it deepens the appreciation of the perception of architectural experience and bridges an essential dualism (the mind–body split), relies on the conception of the human body as subject and space as object.<sup>(13)</sup>

Kovar is making an overall critique of space-body dualism through the work of Julia Kristeva and Gilles Deleuze. While her argument establishes a clear problem with phenomenology and architecture as a whole, Ahmed’s approach recognizes similar shortcomings but does not reject phenomenology outright.

#### vi. Queer Phenomenology

Ahmed's theoretical approach also allows for her to think along with phenomenology without feeling the need to prove or justify phenomenology's arguments. She let go of the phenomenological language but maintained many of the insights she developed in *Queer Phenomenology* and rearticulated in “Orientations Matter.” (in *New Materialisms*) For example, her unique take on “orientations” and “the background” remains salient. Kovar’s emphasis proves a starker description of the shortcomings of phenomenology, which makes it somewhat of a surprising direction in the development of Ahmed’s publicness of affect. However, Ahmed clarifies what aspects of phenomenology that drew her attention She writes, “I arrived at phenomenology because, in part, the concept of orientation led me there. It matters how we arrive at the places we do....by taking a certain route.” QP, 2 This motivation provides insight into how this text extends some of her earlier work.

The background is an important aspect of how Ahmed interprets phenomenology. For Ahmed if phenomenology is to attend to the background, it might do so by giving an account of the conditions of emergence for something, which would not necessarily be available in how that thing presents itself to consciousness.OM, 240.

Phenomenology would seem to give primacy to human movement if it were not for Ahmed's understanding of affects, her incorporation of Marxist critique of the fetishized object, and her interest in the event of the encounter. The movement and circulation she are interested in, in say *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, continue to be "on the move" as she more directly engages objects, such as tables, pens, and chairs. She takes "the table" as the primary object through which she theorizes how objects become "orientation devices."<sup>(235)</sup> Her argument for "how" objects become orientation devices is profoundly subtle. The descriptions of our relationships with tables seem ordinary, natural, "straight forward" in that we intuit some of the statements once we "slow down" and "reflect" upon what she is saying, which in itself is a re-orientation. A re-orientation does not require a new birth, although it may have an element of natality, not exclusively knowledge production or stimulation but attunement—a poietic orientation. Not in terms of knowing or understanding, but becoming-with-in-difference (similar to Keller's theopoetics and distinct from Heidegger's concept of "Mitsein") and experiencing change enacted in relation and not the strengthening of the ego.

Attunement should not be mistaken for a matter of the will whereby you "attune better," "do better," "care more" as in the application of more force or intensity—attunement as an orientation is affective and relational. It is dangerous to assume you can directly access the background and therefore be aligned through effort and power. Ahmed strongly argues against notions that one can be transparently aligned with others. (CPE, 10) The "fantasy of proximity"<sup>(SE, 166)</sup> is that the ones in proximity share an alignment. "The model of 'emotional contagion' risks transforming an emotion into property, as something that one has, and can then pass on, as if what passes on is the same thing."<sup>(10)</sup> The incorrect assumption that the background is available to all also discounts the asymmetry of power that accompanies racism. (I will say more about the "phenomenology of whiteness" below). Therefore,

If matter is affected by orientations, by the ways in which bodies are directed toward things, it follows that matter is dynamic, unstable, and contingent. What matters is itself an effect of proximities: we are touched by what comes near, just as what comes near is affected by directions we have already taken. (OM, 234) . . . Orientations shape how the world coheres around me. Orientations affect what is near or proximate to the body, those objects that we do things with. . . . Spaces too are oriented in the sense that certain bodies are 'in place' in this or that place. (OM, 236)

Ahmed intertwines concepts of movement and circulation, mutability, and histories of arrival with the particularity of proximal encounters involving objects. This includes both cultural and embodied objects. In her later texts, she describes the family as a "happy object," further expanding on these themes. "We inherit proximities. We inherit the nearness of some objects more than others...nearness and proximity is what already 'resides at home.'" It is important to remember in this discussion that affects are purposely called *impressions* in *Cultural Politics of Emotion* precisely to avoid the polemics of the separation of emotions, sensations, and thought.

Sara Ahmed in "Orientations Matter" in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds. (Durham, NC: Duke Univ Press, 2010), 248. At the beginning of her essay, she reflects on her inclusion in this edited volume. She writes, I would nonetheless resist calling my own contribution a "new" materialism inasmuch as my own work draws on, and is indebted to, earlier feminist engagements with phenomenology that were undertaken during the period of "the cultural turn." These phenomenological engagements belie the claim made by some recent materialist critics to the effect that, during this period, matter was the only thing that did not matter." In her endnotes, she describes her engagement with the "new materialism turn": For an articulation of this idea, see Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity.' I have elsewhere questioned the way articulations of so-called new materialism have relied on a foundational gesture whereby they constitute earlier work (especially other feminist work) written during the "cultural turn" as against matter, and opposed to related tropes of materiality such as biology or the real. See Ahmed, 'Imaginary Prohibitions.'" 254.

Ahmed explains, in the “Feel Your Way,” “I will use the idea of ‘impression’ as it allows me to avoid making analytical distinctions between bodily sensation, emotion and thought as if they could be ‘experienced’ as distinct realms of human ‘experience.’” Introduction to CPE, 6, 8, 11

## INTERLUDE THREE CONTENT NOTES

fn. 1. “Following an alleged assault on a correctional officer last week, Boston police swept the area around Melnea Cass Boulevard and Massachusetts Avenue, arresting many individuals and telling homeless people there to head out.”

(See Interlude three)

“On Aug. 6, the Boston Police Department drew national attention for destroying wheelchairs of homeless residents in the trash compactor of a garbage truck as family and friends begged officers to stop. It was the sixth night of “Operation Clean Sweep,” a series of raids targeting Boston’s transient community living along a stretch of the South End known as the “Methadone Mile” or “the Mile,” named for its concentration of health infrastructure serving people who use opioids.”

Jonathan Ben-Menachem, “Pulling back the Curtain on Clean Sweep,” *The Appeal*, Aug 15, 2019.

### i. The Presence of Urban Renewal Histories

Months after the murders of Eric Garner, John Crawford III, and Michael Brown, the architecture journal *We-Aggregate* published articles on the intersection of the Black Lives Matter movement and architecture. For activists and scholars attuned to structural racism, “structural” points to how the built environment is both a physical manifestation of histories of racism as well as a participant in the maintenance and continuation of racial inequality. Architecture and its associated design practices and politics are significant barriers to social justice.

This dissertation argues that one of the difficulties of critically engaging with issues concerning the constructedness of homelessness from a theological point of view is the limited engagement with the disciplines that are active in the construction and maintenance of the built environment. Without sufficient critical tools, approaches to homelessness that are taken up in theology and philosophy risk smuggling preconceived definitions of social problems that result in a recapitulation of unjust, stigmatizing, dehumanizing, and ignoring the privileging of property and rights to place. Issues of architecture extend beyond the politics of homelessness and in the history of poverty, theologies of work and responsibility permeate perceptions of homelessness, mental health, and substance use. The dematerialization of homelessness is just one of the difficulties that contributes to the perceived groundlessness, non-materiality, and extra-disciplinary status of homelessness. The absence of resources and agency comes to characterize those who seek social services, charity, and aid. To more adequately address these issues, chapter four focuses on the interplay between agency, materiality, and causality. Criminalization and pathologization of homelessness and poverty are sustained by who controls how bodies move through space and who has access to buildings and property.

Chapter three established a relationship between affect and architecture in terms of charity and friction in the home and shelter. Chapter two focused on architecture’s exterior, site, and governance. This chapter holds on to the interior and exterior and moves to the level of fields, assemblages, and ecologies. This chapter would appear “less” architectural if it were not for architectural voices that share a language

wrapped up with fields, human-nonhuman assemblages, and ecologies—a fairly recent turn in architecture practice.

Architectural historian Brian Goldstein contributed a short piece to the Black Lives Matter edition of the online architectural history and cultural criticism journal *We-Aggregate*. The journal editors announced the project was directly motivated “by the scholars, activists, and everyday citizens who spoke out, marched, and protested against police killings of African-Americans;” Goldstein’s article was a part of the journal’s effort to “put Black lives at the center of our thinking about architecture and its history.” Goldstein revisited the events surrounding the 1967 Newark Riots that lasted for several days and resulted in the loss of life, destruction of property, and the mobilization of police. “Two white Newark, New Jersey police officers arrested John Smith, an African American cabdriver, on the night of July 12, 1967. Police claimed Smith had tailgated a patrol car and resisted arrest; witnesses argued that officers had beaten Smith without reason.” (<https://www.we-aggregate.org/piece/the-invisible-brother-with-a-brick>) Protesters gathered outside the precinct, and people reportedly threw Molotov cocktails at the building. Goldstein set up the event in a method we’re comfortable receiving news events—naming a specific action followed by the cause and effect. He then turned away from the news-narrative, rather than countering the reported events he searched for what “lurked beneath” the surface-story and stated: “Newark’s African Americans regularly faced two kinds of violence: police violence and planning violence.” I suggest another way of describing what “lurks beneath” for the purposes of this dissertation including what critical geographer Nigel Thrift calls “roiling maelstroms of affect.” (57) Thrift refers to “particular affects” being “continually on the boil, rising here, subsiding there, and these affects continually manifest themselves in events which can take place either at a grand scale or simply as a part of continuing everyday life.” (Nigel Thrift, “Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect,” *Geogr. Ann.* 86 B (1): 60). Goldstein offers a possible critical-historical-architectural method for the hermeneutics of violent events associated with spatial e(a)ffects.

Agents of planning violence donned more bureaucratic clothing but arguably imposed a greater toll. Between the early 1950s and 1967, Newark, the leading recipient of federal redevelopment funding per capita, executed 17 urban renewal projects. In the Central Ward, the city’s redevelopment body, the Newark Housing Authority (NHA), built campuses for the Newark College of Engineering and Rutgers University-Newark. Nearby, officials packed 18,000 black citizens into public housing high-rises. Such redevelopment wrought tremendous social costs, displacing as many as 25,000 and destroying almost 7,500 dwellings, only worsening already acute overcrowding and concentrated poverty.

Goldstein implies roiling affects were associated with the infrastructural changes Newark’s Central Ward underwent in the 1950s and 1960s. “Indeed,” Goldstein clarifies, “if John Smith’s arrest had sparked the riot, many blamed the latest redevelopment effort as its catalyst: a new, 150-acre campus for the New Jersey College of Medicine and Dentistry in the Central Ward. That project, announced in December 1966, was to displace 8,000 more families and over 20,000 people. Understandably, residents responded to the news with anger.” (Goldstein) [my emphasis] What constitutes a spark and a catalyst? These are not calculable or easily definable variables, but the use of the words spark, and catalyst are positioned at different scales of causality that suggests there are multiple agents acting in present moments. Similar to Thrift’s project to “better understand-sense how our built environments not only influence our interconnections by ‘setting the stage’ on which our relationality plays out but also how buildings, as actants, create affects of becoming.” (Thrift) In the case of Newark civil unrest in the wake of urban renewal, historians and civil rights activists can see how “planning and policing fomented the riots, but the riots unexpectedly fomented a new form of planning.” (Goldstein) Goldstein highlights how urban development, civil protests, and weaponized objects are interconnected and how buildings in their conceptualization, construction, and razing can produce affects but also community organization and the resistance to the justification of place-based violence through the attribution of blame, guilt, or reduced capacity. This chapter seeks to clarify the complex and often unspoken relationship between animate-inanimate material ecologies and the conceptualization of a “will-agency-responsibility complex.”

Chapter four explores the theological and philosophical entanglement of will and agency and proposes ecological thinking to envision and create just forms of community planning and development that resist simplistic attributions of blame or cause of events to individuals—i. e. the problem of defining

events that are significantly linked to place, planning, and architecture that reflect the bias of assigning disruption of civility to particular bodies. (Interlude four reveals further details about the events surrounding Boston Urban Renewal and the events surrounding Operation Clean Sweep). <https://www.we-aggregate.org/piece/the-invisible-brother-with-a-brick#fnref:4>

Police violence and planning violence should not be thought of as separate entities. Police violence and planning violence sets up domains of accountability, but it also reinforces the domains of intervention and activism. Police violence is presumed to be identifiable by the forms policing takes. But policing pursued through the built environment, land use, and weaponization of objects that are not labeled as police entities, one's sphere of critique and activism becomes limited and remains distant. The distancing comes in part from the idea that value and virtue are associated with material arrangements and are desirable and positive and therefore have positive characteristics, affects, and influence. The pursuit of a valuable material arrangement which is heavily influenced by neoliberal notions of private property and whiteness virtues of frictionless communalism, limits the range of possible causes of destruction to property and causes of friction to those agents, or bodies, which have characteristics that go against desirable placement of bodies and things. There are spectrums of capacity and debility, but there is also a spectrum of attribution. Therefore, a person may be identified as having less agency and at the same time having the ability to cause negative outcomes. The paradox is an insidious construction of the most vulnerable people are also the most suspicious. By limiting the frame of causality of a set of events, a dominant discourse only has to account for a narrow explanatory frame. It is easier to assign a cause and effect relationship to an immediate, myopic action, even if it is inaccurate, for example, the cause of a brick flying through the air, than it is to assign blame to a person subject to arrest, punishment, rehabilitation, or dislocation to a decentralized amorphous set of circumstances, such as urban renewal.

The assemblage of intention, responsibility, and causality are tied to observable correlations that are "verifiable" by the most privileged forms of logic and the privileged sense of vision. The unreasonable and the unseen are not readily available to take on responsibility for events associated with homelessness.

"From a governmentality perspective, then, 'neo-liberalism is a political rationality that tries to render the social domain economic and to link a reduction in (welfare) state services and security systems to the increasing call for 'personal responsibility' and 'self-care'" (Lemke 2001, 203). . . in other words, neoliberal governmentality emerges as a form of governance that relies on a generalized praxis of 'responsibilization'." "Indeed, governmentality scholars—and Foucault himself—have noted that striving for security and controllability, on the one hand, and culture of danger and stimulation offer, on the other, are intrinsic, complementary aspects of liberal governmentality (Foucault 2008; Lemke, Larsen, and Hvidbak 2011)." (217).

Jarkko Pyysiäinen, Darren Halpinband Andrew Guilfoyle, "Neoliberal governance and responsibilization of agents: reassessing the mechanisms of responsibility-shift in neoliberal discursive environments," *DISTINKTION: JOURNAL OF SOCIAL THEORY*, 2017 VOL. 18, NO. 2, 215–235 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1600910X.2017.1331858>

When racism and marginalization is at the center of our thinking about living together in proximity in cities, towns, and neighborhoods, architecture and history are seen as intertwined and makes evident that architecture is more than the limited field of housing and development. Architecture participates in the aggregate of bodies and materials, histories and locations. An aggregate or an assemblage that includes architecture makes clear that the building construction was never an autonomous project. And more, buildings no longer stand in isolation from the surrounding objects, be they buildings, automobiles, benches, or alleys. And the buildings do not function in the same way, for example, listening to the agendas to programs in many major cities called "Business Improvement Districts," a "place of business," does not have the same field of influence as a community health center, a church with an outreach program, or a building marked as "blight." The distinction is not an ontological one, but it does function materially.

Architects working at the threshold of imminent challenges and complex political and ecological quagmires have had to alter the way they define and practice architecture. Philosophers and theologians

who emphasize relational ontologies, assemblage, new materialism, and ecological thinking, have been arguing for an urgent shift in atomistic thinking and Western arborist and foundation metaphysics. Architects attuned to the climate crisis have expanded their understanding to include objects and fields beyond the building. At the same time, architects focusing on area of conflict, such as the Palestinian and Israeli histories of conflict, have expanded their knowledge and tools out of necessity to adequately account for the material-immaterial destruction and justice seeking practices by treating objects as subjects to counter epistemologies that turn bodies into objects.

The architects inspire my openness to thinking about architecture in an expansive way that does not turn away from the architecture profession. And this chapter also continues my argument that theologies on architecture, that focus mostly on themes related to sacred architecture, must expand if they are to effectively intervene in increasing complex entanglements. Theology and interpretations of the participation or the inactivity influence our orientation and our relation to our environment. This chapter focuses on a particular intersection between an “object-centered” process such as architecture and a “subject-centered” process such as the humanities, particularly theology, and philosophy. Practicing architects and theorists has been helpful in the pursuit of the bridging project I call a theopoetics of architecture because philosophies and theories of architecture that get published as volumes rely heavily on continental philosophers. Part of the issue is the lag in publication; there is an increasing number of texts that include more diverse voices and topics than anthologies published between 2000 and 2015.

In response to how the built environment becomes an integral network for how inequalities place out in present events related to people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity. And in response to the absence of enough focus on how bodies are acted upon through the built environment and surrounding objects. In response to interpretations of events that distribute blame and responsibility in a formulation that accounts for a person's humanity as it relates to their location, exposure to surveillance, or profiled identities, this chapter focuses on the ways in which agency is unequally distributed across bodies and materiality. It attempts to address some of the deep theological and philosophical grounding of agency. Finally, I introduce language that can, and is, shared across process theologies and relational philosophies and architecture practices that center ecological problems that include climate but also attempts to apply “ecological thinking” to complex realities “on the ground.”

Mass and Cass South End Neighborhood, Boston, MA

Boston has a significant history of urban renewal projects that displaced many of the working class and low income families that included diverse ethnicities and races that populated the West End. The destruction and dislocation resulted in the concentration of poverty in other areas of Boston leaving the West End, an area adjacent to a significant white affluent population that lived in Beacon Hill to expand and it allocated land that prioritized economic growth and business development. (<https://thewestendmuseum.org/history/era/modern/population-and-housing-trends-in-the-post-renewal-west-end/>) The razing of the West End in 1957 by the Boston Housing Authority (renamed Boston Redevelopment Authority, BRA and since changed to the Boston Planning and Development Authority, BPDA) created striking images of destruction/creation. Similar razing and displacement processes occurred in Boston's South End becoming a pivotal moment in the gentrification of the South End.

## CHAPTER FIVE CONTENT NOTES

fn. 4. There are many questions that I will not be able to address in this chapter, but they are no less important than the ones I have the space to address:

How do conceptions of anthropocentric individualism versus ecological considerations influence the interpretation of actions and events that occur between human and nonhuman agents?

Does the action of an object or a subject hover at the edge of chaos or remain below the threshold of emergence along a hierarchy of material vitality?

Is the agent which is determined to be the catalyst of social chaos form in close proximity or from a distance of the perceived action. How do we understand agency in terms of where capacity conceptually lies?

The “too-muchness” of these too many questions reflects the chaotic potential present in the formation of a tenuous and temporary order. Ecological thinking does not resolve these questions, the too-muchness does not allow for it, but it does make visible complexity and questions reductiveness. Practically (Gk. praktikē), seeking an answer to questions surrounding a set of events is expected and desirable, but gravitating toward a limited landscape to find casual agents does not clarify a set of circumstances. It alters and distorts the conditions; it imposes a top-down order on vibrant ecologies. Conviction, in thought prior to juridical action, comes when an individual can be interpreted as a causal agent. Yet, clarity won by placing agency nearly exclusively inside an individual forfeits an acknowledgment of ecological systems, entangled materialities, and their active participation in structural fields.

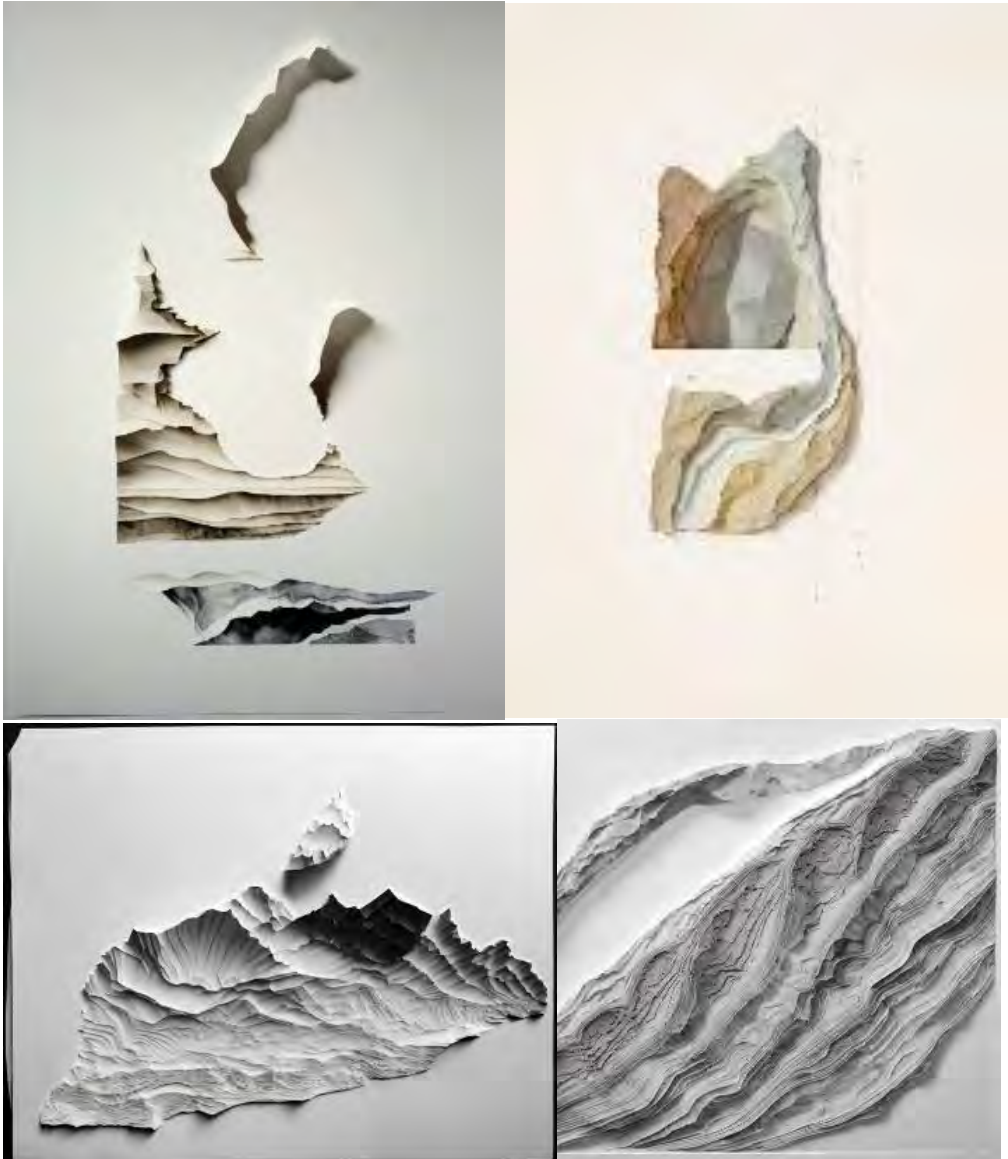
fn. 11. Ahmed's exploration of the concept of the "willful child" delves into the complex historical connections between the will, obedience, passivity, and virtue. In a similar vein, Robin Evans' examination of 19th-century prison architecture in his work *The Fabrication of Virtue* touches upon these interconnected ideas, although not explicitly in theological terms. Evans's project can be seen as a kind of political theology of architecture, where obedience permeates the systematic pursuit of behavior modification. Theories of pedagogy have demonstrated how obedience continues to be ingrained in educational practices. Furthermore, some scholars have extended this analysis to explore how architectural structures and programs subtly guide children toward a specific alignment with directed goals, exerting spectral levels of pressure to encourage compliance and alignment with the established program. Obedience, as understood through the lens of Augustine, is not solely a result of coercion or dominant forces; it can also be seen as a form of alignment or getting in line, as *Queer Phenomenology* suggests. Moreover, acts of obedience and disobedience are not always clear-cut and pure; they exist in a nuanced interplay. Play, for instance, can serve as a pedagogical tool that encourages certain developments, yet it also contains an element of uncontrolled spontaneity that does not necessarily seek strict obedience in the conventional sense. By inviting a person's will and agency to actively participate in an activity, desired goals can be achieved, blurring the boundaries between obedience and disobedience. This perspective aligns with Diana Ramirez-Jasso's research described in "Imagining the Garden: Childhood, Landscape, and Architecture in Early Pedagogy, 1761-1850."

Images by R. Kyle Warren. “Blurring Material Ecologies”









## AFTERWORD CONTENT NOTES

fn. 1. Kierkegaard describes the neighborly scene as: Christ says to the Pharisee [lawyer], ‘Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?’ The Pharisee [lawyer] answers correctly, ‘the one who showed mercy to him.’ This means that by recognizing your duty you easily discover who your neighbor is.” (38) The Pharisee’s answer is contained in Christ’s question, which by its form necessitated the Pharisee’s answering this way. He towards whom i have a duty is my neighbour, and when I fulfill my duty i prove that i am a neighbour. Christ does not speak about recognizing one’s neighbour but about being a neighbour oneself, about proving oneself to be a neighbour, something the samaritan showed by his compassion. By this he did not prove that the assaulted man was his neighbour but that he was a neighbour of the one assaulted. The Levite and the priest were in a stricter sense neighbours of the assaulted man, but they wished to ignore it. . . . Choosing a lover, finding a friend,

yes, that is a long, hard job, but one's neighbour is easy to recognise, easy to find—if one himself will only recognise his duty. (*Works of Love*, 38-9) Søren Kierkegaard et al., *Works of Love: Some Christian Reflections in the Form of Discourses* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1970).

I will look at some of the ways he conceptualized the neighbor, although he centers love, more specifically neighbor-love, as his subject. (Kierkegaard distinguishes between works of love versus love alone). Kierkegaard's treatise on Christian love of your neighbor is set in the context of Danish Romanticism. Significantly for Kierkegaard, neighbor-love-as-yourself is fundamentally distinct from "the poet's" idea of love. In *Works*, the poet stands for all forms of expressing romantic or erotic love across literature, theater, poetry, and music. *Works of Love* explores agape and identifies it as a "higher" love. In arguments against Kierkegaard's construction of the duty to love, most notably perhaps by Theodor Adorno, it's been oversimplified to mean a universal transcendental abstract love that does not account for context and cannot address social inequities or social injustice. Adorno does stress the important role critical theory can contribute to Kierkegaard's work, giving it a critical edge, Kierkegaard scholars have argued Adorno misrepresents some of Kierkegaard's concepts in *Works*. I do not have space to explore his complex take on love. For the purposes of this chapter, I introduce his commentary on love to open up a more sustained questioning of the notion of neighbor, moving beyond an identity position toward an ethical event. Neighbor, I argue, benefits from thinking of becoming-neighbor, neighboring that happens in a moment of *relatum*, but does not persist as an identity or subject position.

fn. 8. The act of giving an account of an event goes beyond a simple recitation of facts. An account as a re-collection depends on ideas about subjectivity, objectivity, and the moral implications tied to concepts such as *accountability* and *responsibility*. Butler responds to Adorno's moral/ethical "'I' that acts" in *Problems in Moral Philosophy*, by writing, "Yet there is no 'I' that can fully stand apart from the social conditions of its emergence, no 'I' that is not implicated in a set of conditioning moral norms, which, being norms, have a social character that exceeds a purely personal or idiosyncratic meaning."

The construction of "social problems" in public discourse directs most of its attention to locating "the problem" without challenging how we understand "the social" and our relationship to it. Butler argues, "The 'I' cannot tell the story of its own emergence, and the conditions of its own possibility, without in some sense bearing witness to a state of affairs to which one could not have been present, prior to one's own becoming, and so narrating that which one cannot know."# Which does not mean one does not have "the grounds for *agency* and the conditions for *accountability*" rather it signals the way in which "we are, from the start, ethically implicated in the lives of others."

Recognizing the limitations of our own self-understanding can foster patience toward others by suspending expectations of others' constant self-definition and mandated disclosure of their identities. The relational constitution of the self does not negate our agency and accountability but rather highlights one's inherent ethical implications in the lives of others. Con-vivality becomes a tautology. Living *with* or *together* (*con*) provides the structure of *living*, *to live* (*vivere*). The act of *giving an account* (Butler) takes a narrative form, relying not only on recounting sequential events with plausible transitions, but also on an authoritative narrative voice that aims to persuade.

In *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Judith Butler writes:

The Nietzschean postulation of the self as a 'cause' has a genealogy that must be understood as part of the reduction of ethical philosophy to the inward mutilations of conscience. Such a move not only severs the task of ethics from the matter of social life and the historically revisable grids of intelligibility within which any of us emerge, if we do, but it fails to understand the resource of primary and irreducible relations to others as a precondition of ethical responsiveness. . . and if that narcissism also leads to an ethical violence that knows no grace of self-acceptance or forgiveness, then it would seem obligatory, if not urgent, to return the question of responsibility to the question 'How are we formed within social life, and at what cost?' (134-5)

The conceptualization of causes has political ramifications and how we understand ourselves as responsible ethical subjects.

fn. 19. Ahmed adds, “a social will is also a will that has acquired momentum. Momentum usually refers to the force of a moving body. It can also mean an impetus or cause of an event. The gathering of momentum is how things come to happen in this way or that.”

fn. 93. I discussed Weizman further in chapter two, so I briefly mention his work here as an example of how more than human materiality participates in biopolitical control over the environment. Forensic architecture is the practice of identifying the role the built environment plays in the governance of life and death. When militarization and policing strategies include the distancing of human agents from the sites of violence through weapons, technology, and resource control, material ecologies are often the only proximal assemblages that remain after the destruction of flesh and ecosystems. The absence of human actors in the proximity of destruction participates in the precarity of life because agents, nationalistically identified as good agents, remain at a distance while “less-human” subjects, lacking in full agency yet responsible for their own precarity are representationally closer to the site of chaos. Therefore, the ecological viewpoint exposes assumptions that shape how we attribute causality, responsibility, and “social problems.”

i. Political Theology of Neighbor

The distortion of neighbor identity prevents us from recognizing the potentiality of being our neighbor in the other, as well as preventing us from properly “seeing” and loving the neighbor. The result of which is our inability to effectively and responsibly love a neighbor has initially defaced. In *Political Theology of the Neighbor*, Slavoj Žižek describes this event as “a violent gesture of cutting into this multitude and privileging a One as the neighbor...” This moment of drawing a line of inclusion and exclusion where we judge who is and is not our neighbor, “this is the original sin-choice of love.” Psychoanalysis explores the encounter with “the other”/neighbor. Psychoanalysis further points to the (im)possibility of loving the neighbor because of the ways we construct the other. In the moment of encountering the alien other, we can tend toward states of neurosis or psychosis which both keep us from being able to appropriately love our neighbor.

Whereas such an encounter with the absolute alterity of the neighbor is paradigmatic of ethics for Levinas, for Lacan it is neither ethical nor real love, Neurosis and psychosis represent two symmetrical modes of the failure to love the neighbor: whereas the neurotic becomes an autonomous subject of desire in turning away from the impossibility of the command to love the neighbor, the psychotic fails to achieve subjectivity while succeeding in experiencing the other as radically other, loving the neighbor not wisely, but too well. Lacan defines das Ding (“the thing”) as “the encounter with something in the other that is completely alien-an intrusive foreignness that goes beyond the compositions of self and other, and their politicizations as ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’.”

“Judaism opens up a tradition in which an alien traumatic kernel forever persists in my neighbor; the neighbor remains an impenetrable, enigmatic presence that, far from serving my project of self-disciplining moderation and prudence, hystericizes me.” From a psychoanalytic perspective, the command to “love the neighbor as yourself” also leads one to reflect on the nature of self-love and subjectivity. Freud’s reflections on the neighbor highlight the seeming impossibility of psychoanalysis as an important resource for reflecting on the injunction of neighbor-enemy-love. “Not merely is this stranger in general unworthy of my love,” Freud writes, “I must honestly confess that he has more claims to my hostility and even my hatred.” Freud’s work reminds us of the (im)possibility of loving the neighbor. Is our neighbor seen in terms of affiliation-pertaining to the self, familial, and friend-or does neighbor love extend to “the alien other” including the stranger and even the enemy?

Jesus commands his followers to enlarge the circle of inclusion to include even the enemy (Matt 5:44, Luk 6:27, Luk 6:35). But how do we understand the “enemy”? Carl Schmitt in *The Concept of the Political*, the enemy is not evil:

The distinction of friend and enemy denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation...The political enemy is...the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specifically intense way, existentially something different and

alien...Each participant is in a position to judge whether the adversary tends to negate his opponent's way of life and therefore must be repulsed or fought in order to preserve one's own form of existence.

Schmitt argues that political logic is based on friend-enemy distinction that maintains an ever-present threat of war. If we give way to the logic of friend-enemy political logic, we are locked in a system that requires us to make the distinctions between friend-enemy in order to maintain our subjectivity. However, Reinhard describes the innate instability of the friend-enemy diad. Reinhard argues, "in Schmitt's political theology: the enemy can also be a friend, and the friend is sometimes an enemy. The border between them, and between the public and private realms they are associated with, is 'fragile, porous, contestable,' and to this extent 'the Schmittian discourse collapses' and against the threat of that ruin, it takes its form." Reinhard seeks to move beyond the theological politics of friend-enemy which he understands to be a system maintained by strict borders of "interiority (friends) and exteriority (enemies)." Reinhard suggests Lacan's notion of the logic of sexuation as a way beyond Schmitt's political understanding toward a political theology of the neighbor.

Reinhard suggests Derrida's "politics for loving" is an alternate to the death-dealing logic of friend-enemy dyad. "Derrida's argument in the Politics of Friendship is not so much that we have entered into a historical period where the friend-enemy polarity has broken down, but that it is an inherently unstable opposition." Derrida offers a "politics for loving" that is a love (not) beyond the political. Reinhard suggests, "such a politics can be located in the figure of the neighbor-the figure that materializes the uncertain division between the friend/family/self and the enemy/stranger/other."

Reinhard's work, as it relates to neighborism, moves us to recognize the tension present in the eventful encounter with the other (das Ding). From this encounter, we are tempted toward psychosis or neurosis when we fail to recognize the depth of mystery within ourselves and the other. "The possibility of a 'We,' of communality, is granted on the basis of the fact that every familiar is ultimately strange and that, indeed, I am even in a crucial sense a stranger to myself." If we fail to judge the other as a human being as neighbor, we perceive an enemy that "is worthy of my hostility". However, if we can accept an alternative logic, one where an open-set of neighborhoods is the grounding for the encounter with the other, we will be able to move beyond the politics of friend-enemy to a politics of neighbor. But the person as neighbor is not meant to be made into our image, into sameness that distorts their individuality.

When we come in contact with another, we are strangers (a stranger to ourselves and others) meeting another stranger. In Freud and the Non-European, Said is intrigued by the implications of Freud's work in Moses and Monotheism for its potential to point toward a "politics of diaspora life," a politics that supports a cosmopolitan perspective.

People perform destructive acts of paternalism, colonialism, and economic exploitation under the banner of being a "good" neighbor. Is it impossible to love my neighbor when I am a part of hegemonic systems that name who/what is neighbor. Neighbor-love seen as a pristine orientation toward the other ignores power differentials and systems of stereotypization that I am never free of. My love of my neighbor is an impossibility, not only because the act of loving is the impossible, but also because I distort, deface, and possess my neighbor. Does neighbor-love remain neighbor-love if my neighbor is systematized, thematized, conceptualized, subject of the seemingly infinite number of -isms humans maintain, i. e. sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, lookism as well as all the -isms I am guilty of because of my blindness to them?

## ii. Good Neighbor

The cultural and societal images of neighbor typically conjure images of familiarity, sisterhood/brotherhood, similarity, inclusion. Neighbor calls forth warm feelings of sameness. My neighbor is in my neighborhood. The person I comfortably pass daily in my specific context; the image of neighborhood suggests my neighbor is someone I am polite to while also respecting their privacy. A "good" neighbor respects my privacy and acts in accordance with social norms of etiquette.

“Good” neighborhoods maintain property value; “bad” neighborhoods lack what good neighborhoods have. Neighbor and neighborhood are marketable and political.

iii. Dwelling

dwel·ing /ˈdweliNG/

noun noun: dwelling; plural noun: dwellings; noun: dwelling place; plural noun: dwelling places

a house, apartment, or other place of residence.

"the proposed dwelling is out of keeping with those nearby" (Oxford Languages)

dwel /dwel/

verb gerund or present participle: dwelling; adjective: -dwelling

live in or at a specified place.

"groups of people still dwell in these caves"

origin

Old English dwellan ‘lead astray, hinder, delay’ (in Middle English ‘tarry, remain in a place’), of Germanic origin; related to Middle Dutch dwellen ‘stun, perplex’ and Old Norse dvelja ‘delay, tarry, stay’. (Oxford Languages)

"place of residence, habitation, abode," mid-14c., verbal noun from dwell (v.). Earlier it meant "a stupor" (early 14c.); "delay, procrastination; a staying in a place" (c. 1300). (Etymology Online)

Use over time for dwelling (Oxford Languages)

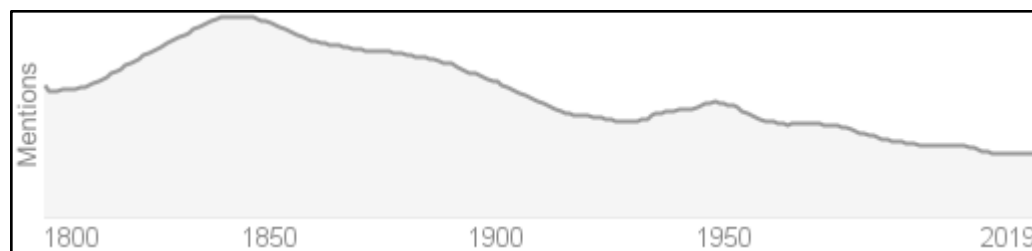


Figure 67The use of the word dwelling in books accessible by Google Ngram over time.

dwel (v.)

Old English dwellan "to lead into error, deceive, mislead," related to dwelian "to be led into error, go wrong in belief or judgment," from Proto-Germanic \*dwaljana "to delay, hesitate," \*dwelana "go astray" (source also of Old Norse dvelja "to retard, delay," Danish dvæle "to linger, dwell," Swedish dväljas "to dwell, reside;" Middle Dutch dwellen "to stun, perplex;" Old High German twellen "to hinder,

delay") from PIE \*dhwel-, extended form of root \*dheu- (1) "dust, cloud, vapor, smoke" (also forming words with the related notions of "defective perception or wits").

The apparent sense evolution in Middle English was through "to procrastinate, delay, be tardy in coming" (late 12c.), to "linger, remain, stay, sojourn," to "make a home, abide as a permanent resident" (mid-14c.). From late 14c. as "remain (in a certain condition or status)," as in phrase dwell upon "keep the attention fixed on." Related: Dwelled; dwelt (for which see went); dwells.

It had a noun form in Old English, gedweola "error, heresy, madness." Also compare Middle English dwale "deception, trickery," from Old English dwala or from a Scandinavian cognate (such as Danish dvale "trance, stupor, stupefaction"); dwale survived into late Middle English as "a sleeping potion, narcotic drink, deadly nightshade." (Etymology Online)



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## APPENDIX ONE

### TIMELINE

#### **AN ABRIDGED HISTORY OF “HOUSES”**

#### ARCHITECTURES, LANDSCAPES, AND INFRASTRUCTURES OF CONFINEMENT, CORRECTION, AND CARE IN BOSTON

This timeline traces a complex history of poverty, public health, and social reform in Boston from the 17th century to the present day. It aims to illuminate how the city's changing approaches to societal issues like poverty, disease, addiction, and homelessness have both reflected and shaped its urban landscape over 400 years.

The timeline contextualizes major events, policies, and ideologies against key demographic shifts, economic forces, and technological innovations that impacted Boston's development. It highlights the implications of morality in matters of public welfare, noting how religious paternalism gave way to institutional oversight and increasingly interventionist models of care.

Through its broad chronological scope, the timeline establishes historical continuities around intertwined themes of social control, medicalization, risk management, and the categorization of human difference. It aims to provide perspective on the complex roots of contemporary issues around housing, healthcare, and the criminalization of poverty.

## 17th Century



### pre1600s

Boston and its Harbor Islands are seasonal farming and fishing grounds for Native Massachusetts communities



### 1630

John Winthrop's famous "Model of Christian Charity" sermon. Inspired on the Puritans to see themselves as a "city upon a hill" defined by their religious, social, economic, and Christian identity.

### 1644

John Cotton's "The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven" (1644) - Argued members of the church (and by extension the community) should be allowed to have the community's spiritual and temporal power.

Jonathan Winthrop's "The Church as the Kingdom of Heaven" (1644) - Argued the church should be the center of the community, and that the church should be the center of the community's spiritual and temporal power.

### 1647

John Winthrop's "The Day of the Lord" (1647) - A tract by Winthrop that explained his vision for building a new society as a means of "enlightening and 'civilizing' Indians."

### 1650

John Winthrop's "A Memorial to the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony" (1650) - A pamphlet arguing for the establishment of a new society in the North, based on a new set of principles and a new set of laws.

### 1651

John Winthrop's "The Memorial of the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony" (1651) - A pamphlet arguing for the establishment of a new society in the North, based on a new set of principles and a new set of laws.

### 1678

Cotton Mather's "Christianity in America" (1678) - A pamphlet arguing for the establishment of a new society in the North, based on a new set of principles and a new set of laws.



### 1630s

Boston Common used as a shared cow pasture, burial ground, adjacent to the first Boston Gaol (jail). It's "Great Elm" used as the site of public executions.

### 1662

Boston's first Almshouse "for the relief of the poor, the aged, and those incapacitated for labor... to assist, employ, and correct."



### 1670s

Motivated by deep mistrust and fear, the court ordered the immediate relocation of all "Praying Indians" to Deer Island. Close to 1000 individuals were interned, and died in the harsh winter.



ELLIOT  
preaching to the Indians



1388 Statute of Cambridge  
1494 Vagabonds and Beggars Act  
1530 Vagabonds Act  
1547 Poor Law  
1553 Bridewell House of Correction  
1572 Vagabonds Act  
1576 Relief of the Poor, County Houses of Correction  
1597 Act for the Relief of the Poor  
1598 Overseers of the Poor  
1598 Act for the Punishment of Rogues

1631 Earliest known use of the term "workhouse"  
1634 Spectacle, Deer, Hog, Long Islands granted to Boston

1634 Boston Common established  
1634 The Great Elm on the Common, site of public executions  
1635 Boston Gaol (jail)

1636 Boston Night Watch  
1638 The ship Desire arrives, first transfer of enslaved peoples to Boston  
1638 Ann Hutchinson excommunicated  
1641 Body of Liberties defines idle wanderers, common beggars  
1646 "idle and unprofitable" disposed for the common good  
1648 Margaret Jones hanged as a witch  
1654 Warning Out Laws: removal of those of "evil fame"  
1659 3-month residency required to receive poor relief  
1659 Mary Dyer hanged as a Quaker

1662 Boston's first almshouse

1675 Metacomb (or King Philip's) War

1675 Deer Island used to incarcerate "Praying Indians"  
1677 Deer Island used as smallpox quarantine station

1686 New Almshouse institutionalizes poverty in Boston  
1692 Salem Witch Trials  
1692 Province Laws: acts of profanity generate poor relief  
1692 Overseers of the Poor established  
1699 Quarantine Act

# 17th Century

## **pre1600s**

Boston and its Harbor Islands are seasonal farming and fishing grounds for Native Massachuset communities

## **1630s**

Boston Common used as a shared cow pasture, burial ground, adjacent to the first Boston Gaol (jail). It's "Great Elm" used as the site of public executions.

## **1630**

*John Winthrop's famous "Model of Christian Charity" sermon - Preached on the Arbella, it laid out Winthrop's vision of the Puritan community as a "city upon a hill" defined by interdependence, mutual assistance, and Christian charity*

## **1644**

*John Cotton's "The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven" (1644) - Argued members and boundaries must be wisely defined to keep the community spiritually and politically sound.*

*Jonathan Mitchell's "Nehemiah on the Wall" (1644) - Used the biblical account of rebuilding Jerusalem's walls as an allegory for strengthening community bounds against external threats to purity.*

## **1647**

*John Eliot's "The Day-Breaking If Not the Sun-Rising of the Gospel with the Indians" (1647) - A tract by the missionary Eliot explaining his rationale for founding praying towns as a means of evangelizing and "civilizing" Indians.*

## **1650**

*John Wilson's "A memento to promote the salvation of the Indians" (1650) - Pamphlet urging further establishment of praying towns as the best means to convert natives to Protestantism in isolated communities.*

## **1651**

*John Norton's "The evacuated fort seconded" (1651) - Sermon arguing for strict supervision and control over Indian towns to Christianize them without risk to nearby English communities.*

## **1662**

Boston's first Almshouse "for the relief of the poor, the aged, and those incapacitated for labor... to assist, employ, and correct."

**1678**

*Cotton Mather's "Christians Negotiation" (1678) - Advocated continued pressure on tribes to settle into structured praying towns governed by English laws for their purported benefit.*

**1670s**

*Motivated by deep mistrust and fear, the court ordered the immediate relocation of all "Praying Indians" to Deer Island. Close to 1000 individuals were interned, and died in the harsh winter.*

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**1530** Vagabonds Act

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**1553** Bridewell House of Correction

**1572** Vagabonds Act

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**1597** Act for the Relief of the Poor

**1598** Overseers of the Poor

**1598** Act for the Punishment of Rogues

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**1677** Deer Island used as smallpox quarantine station

**1686** New Almshouse institutionalizes poverty in Boston

**1692** Salem Witch Trials

**1692** Province Laws: acts of profanity generate poor relief

**1692** Overseers of the Poor established

**1699** Quarantine Act

## 18th Century

**1713**

*By 1709 the city's poor faced a serious shortage of food. They were well aware of who among the town's elite was exploiting the situation. Andrew Belcher, one of the richest merchants in Boston, owned the second largest number of ships in town. He lived in a grand mansion in Cambridge, rode around in imported English carriages, and held many enslaved people.*

*Belcher was hoarding grain with the intent of exporting it to the West Indies, where the owners of sugar plantations — worked by enslaved Africans — would pay almost anything for food products.*

*Cotton Mather counseled his parishioners: "Tis the Lord who has Taken away from you what He has Given to others." The working poor begged to differ. In May 1713, hundreds attacked the warehouse where Andrew Belcher stored his grain.*

**1730s**

The institutionalized oversight of the poor catalyzed the construction of new building typologies and the replacement or resituating of others. A prison was first added to Boston's Almshouse and a Workhouse soon followed.

The Quarantine Hospital once located on Boston's Deer Island moves to nearby Rainsford Island in 1738.

**1739**

*Rules and Orders for the Management of the Work House in Boston "2. That upon their Admission, they be Examin'd, Whether they are free from Lice and foul Distemper; And such as shall not be found clean, shall be put into some particular Room, 'till they be perfectly cleans'd: And that they be Obliged to take Care to keep themselves Wash'd and Comb'd, and their Cloathes neat and whole, and to Change their Linnen Once a Week. 4.*

*That they constantly attend the Worship of God, in the House and observe the Rules prescribed for their Meals."*

**1796**

The Boston Medical Dispensary opens to provide "the means of relief to many necessitous persons, among others, whose feelings would have been hurt by an application for assistance from the alms house; as they are by this charity attended free of any expense by an able physician, either at their own houses, or at the Dispensary, as the case may require, and furnished with whatever medicine they may need, and with wine, if necessary."

**1701** Smallpox Isolation Act

**1703** Authorization to construct Workhouses

**1713** Boston Bread Riots on Boston Common

**1718** Quarantine Hospital established on Spectacle Island

**1721** Smallpox Inoculation (Boston)

**1723** Workhouse Test Act

**1723** Prison added to Boston Almshouse

**1723** "Indians, Negroes, and Mulattoes" prohibited from loitering

**1735** Boston Workhouse Act

**1735** Overseers of the Poor for each of Boston's 12 wards

**1738** Workhouse constructed contiguous to Almshouse and prison

**1738** Quarantine hospital moved to Rainsford Island

**1752** Smallpox epidemic

**1760** Great Boston Fire

**1767** Settlement Laws mandate self-identification of "transiency"

**1776** Declaration of Independence

**1779** Penitentiary Act

**1785** Fort Independence designated as a prison on Castle Island

**1786** Boston Police Department

**1791** Bentham's Panopticon models architectures of correction

**1794** Poor Law: guaranteed provisional care independent of residency

**1796** Boston Dispensary

**1799** Boston Board of Health established



## 19th Century

### 1822

Mayor Josiah Quincy constructed a new "House of Industry" on 60 acres of farmland in isolated South Boston. Modeled on the workhouse rather than the almshouse, it was intended for the reception and employment of the able-bodied poor and emphasized self-discipline and civic contribution. The House of Correction followed a year later.

### 1821

*When Josiah Quincy Jr. recommended a major reform of Boston's poor relief system in 1821, he based his attack on what he saw as misguided public policy compounded by the manipulation of the system by "contented" recipients of poor relief. On the issue of what he called the "abuse of public charities" he quotes approvingly from an English report that "establishes the principle . . . that the existence of any permanent fund for the support of the poor, the appropriation of any revenue . . . has, upon the whole, a direct tendency to increase their numbers [in a way that is] directly productive of paupers."*

### 1825

*Founded in 1825 by Congregationalist minister Reverend Louis Dwight, the Prison Discipline Society of Boston collected facts and statistics on prisons through correspondence and annual visits to various prisons. The objectives of the Society were to urge that: cells be provided for separate confinement at night; bibles be provided to prisons; the gospel be read; prisoners be treated with respect; employment and productive industry be provided; separate housing be provided for lunatics, hardened criminals, and youths and children; common school be provided for prisoners; programs for discharged convicts be implemented; and matrons be available for female prisoners. The Society also discussed the needs of "coloured" prisoners and criminals.*

### 1831

*"The Liberator" was a prominent abolitionist newspaper published by William Lloyd Garrison in the United States during the early 19th century. It was first published on January 1, 1831, and continued its circulation until December 29, 1865. The newspaper played a significant role in the abolitionist movement and was known for its uncompromising stance against slavery.*

*William Lloyd Garrison, a white abolitionist and journalist, founded "The Liberator" in Boston, Massachusetts. He strongly believed in the immediate emancipation of enslaved*

*African Americans and dedicated the newspaper to promoting the cause of abolition. Garrison's radical views and passionate writing style made "The Liberator" one of the most influential anti-slavery publications of its time.*

#### **1847**

In the wake of the Great Irish Famine, nearly 25,000 immigrants arrived in Boston. A quarantine hospital was established on Deer Island "as a precautionary measure to ward off a pestilence that would have been ruinous to the public health and business of the city." All ships judged by port officials to be "foul and infected with any malignant or contagious disease" moored at Deer Island for "cleaning and purification."

#### **1864**

Boston City Hospital opens "intended for the use and comfort of poor patients, to whom medical care will be provided at the expense of the city, and ... to provide accommodations and medical treatment to others, who do not wish to be regarded as dependent on public charity."

#### **1870s**

Due to population constraints at the Deer Island facility, all of the male paupers were transferred to the newly opened Home for the Poor on Rainsford Island in 1872. All the female paupers were transferred to the Home for the Poor at Austin Farm in April 1876. Finally, in 1877, the boy paupers were moved to the Marcella Street Home and the girl paupers followed in 1881.

#### **1879**

*The New England Watch and Ward Society (founded as the New England Society for the Suppression of Vice) was a Boston organization involved in the censorship of books and the performing arts. Its name referred to an earlier volunteer police force with the mission to "watch and ward off evildoers." Its main concerns included combating blasphemy, profanity, obscenity, and other immoral practices. The society's members would patrol bookstores, theaters, and other venues to identify and report objectionable material, often coordinating with police. In the late 1960s it became the Massachusetts Council on Crime and Correction.*

#### **1888**

*"Looking Backward: 2000-1887" is a science fiction novel written by Edward Bellamy and published in 1888. The book presents a vision of a utopian society set in the year 2000, as imagined from the perspective of its protagonist, Julian West.*

*The story begins in Boston in the late 19th century, where Julian West, a young and wealthy aristocrat, falls into a deep sleep and wakes up in the year 2000. He finds himself in a completely transformed society, one that has undergone a peaceful revolution and established a new social order called the "Great Trust."*

*In this future society, social classes have been eradicated, and all citizens live in harmony. The economy is based on a centralized system of production and distribution, coordinated by the government. Every individual is assigned a role in society based on their skills and abilities, and work is seen as a duty and a source of fulfillment rather than a burden. The government ensures that everyone's needs are met, and material wealth is equally distributed among all citizens.*

## **1892**

The settlement movement was a reformist social movement that began in the 1880s. Its goal was to bring the rich and the poor of society together in both physical proximity and social interconnectedness. Its main object was the establishment of "settlement houses" in poor urban areas, in which volunteer middle-class "settlement workers" would transmit "proper" values, behavior and morals to "cure" cycles of poverty. Denison House, in Boston's South Cove, was one of the first in the country

**1801** New Almshouse constructed on Leverett Street

**1803** Boston Female Asylum constructed

**1810** McLean Hospital "for the reception of lunatics"

**1821** Massachusetts General Hospital

**1821** Boston Committee on pauperism

**1822** Leverett Street Jail

**1822** House of Industry, for able-bodied poor

**1823** House of Correction, for the vicious poor

**1827** Massachusetts State Prison Commission investigates the conditions of prisons

**1831** William Lloyd Garrison publishes *The Liberator*

**1832** Boston Lying-in Hospital

**1832** Cholera Quarantine

**1833** New England Anti-Slavery Society

**1834** Poor Law Amendment Act

**1834** Principle of Less Eligibility

**1839** City Lunatic Asylum

**1841** Dorothea Dix recounts incarceration of the mentally ill in Cambridge

**1841** Utopian Community established at Brook Farm

**1845** Great Irish Famine

**1847** Criminals, the poor, and Irish "quarantined" on Deer Island

**1851** Charles Street Jail  
**1853** House of Industry moved to Deer Island  
**1854** Boston Police Department  
**1862** Boston City Hospital admits smallpox patients  
**1863** Boston Draft Riots protest conscription of the poor  
**1864** Boston City Hospital "for the use and comfort of poor patients"  
**1867** Boston Society for Architects  
**1869** Boston Board of Public Health, Disease surveillance  
**1869** Boston Children's Hospital  
**1872** Physicians authorized to remove patients from boarding houses  
**1872** Home for the Poor established on Rainford Island  
**1872** Great Boston Fire  
**1875** Boston Water Supply and Sewage Disposal established  
**1876** Germ theory  
**1878** New England Society for the Suppression of Vice  
**1880s** Settlement Movement  
**1882** Boston takes possession of Long Island  
**1889** Boston Architectural Club (now college) established  
**1892** Denison Settlement House  
**1894** Consolidated Almshouse and Hospital on Long Island  
**1896** House of Industry becomes House of Correction on Deer Island  
**1897** Pauper Institutions Department, Boston

## 20th Century

**1926**

*Racially restrictive covenants refer to contractual agreements that prohibit the purchase, lease, or occupation of a piece of property by a particular group of people, usually African Americans. Racially restrictive covenants were not only mutual agreements between property owners in a neighborhood not to sell to certain people, but were also agreements enforced through the cooperation of real estate boards and neighborhood associations. Racially restrictive covenants became common after 1926 after the U.S. Supreme Court decision, Corrigan v. Buckley, which validated their use.*

**1941**

Long Island administers a Chronic Disease Hospital, providing treatment for those with long-term, or incurable diseases. This new institution housed a specialized facility for the treatment of substance use and addiction.

## **1960s**

Urban renewal's goals - slum clearance, expanding the tax base, and reversing urban decline - targeted older, denser neighborhoods occupied by low-income immigrant and minority groups. The BRA oversaw extensive urban renewal projects that cleared out long standing working-class neighborhoods and communities through demolition. This made way for new development and displaced thousands of residents in the process.

## **1965**

*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. returns to Boston to lead a civil rights march to Roxbury.*

*"Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy. Now is the time. Now is the time to make brotherhood a reality. Now is the time. The vision of the new Boston must extend into the heart of Roxbury. Boston must become a testing ground for the ideals of freedom."*

## **1968**

*Alongside Boston Civil Rights leader Mel King, thousands of protesters camped out in a South End lot in tents and makeshift huts and lean-tos to protest the city's sweeping Urban Renewal schemes. They called it "Tent City." King explains, "The Master Plan for Boston had begun its job of forcing black people out of the South End and into Roxbury and Dorchester in order to accommodate the commercial and residential needs of Boston's banks, insurance companies, and, of course, MIT and Harvard...This systematic denial of jobs, housing, education and political representation by the Boston power structure came into full development in the creation of the "ghetto," for the image of the ghetto allowed the ruling elite to blame the black community for what they had systematically imposed upon us."*

## **1970s**

Pine Street Inn (first privately-run shelter in Boston), Bridge Over Troubled Waters (first street outreach for homeless youth), and Rosie's Place (first women-only shelter) illustrate the emergence of smaller-scale, services-focused, interventionist models of care that supplemented an increasingly overtaxed city system. Their approaches influenced the growth of similar community-based non-profits nationally.

**1908** Boston Women's Municipal League for "social housekeeping"

**1912** Boston Psychiatric Hospital

**1918** Flu Epidemic

**1920s** Racially restrictive housing covenants

**1928** Homeless services and shelter added on Long Island

**1934** FHA redlining

**1935** Boston Housing Authority established

**1936** Gallop's Island closes

**1941** Hospital for chronic disease and alcoholism on Long Island  
**1949** Housing Act  
**1951** Bridge built to connect Long Island to Moon Island  
**1954** Long Island Hospital transferred out of Institutions  
**1957** Boston Redevelopment Authority established  
**1958** West End of Boston razed in Urban Renewal  
**1960** Mission Hill razed in Urban Renewal  
**1962** Scollay Square razed in Urban Renewal  
**1963** Community Mental Health Act  
**1965** Civil Rights rally on Boston Common  
**1968** Mel King leads "Tent City" resistance  
**1968** Fair Housing Act  
**1969** Boston City Hall constructed  
**1969** Pine Street Inn homeless shelter  
**1970** Bridge Over Troubled Waters mobile outreach program  
**1971** Nixon declares "War on Drugs"  
**1972** Supreme Court deems anti-vagrancy laws unconstitutional  
**1972** Federal Deinstitutionalization policy  
**1975** Rosie's Place, shelter for women and children  
**1978** Roxbury Tenants of Harvard protest institutional expansion  
**1985** Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative  
**1987** McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act  
**1989** New England Shelter for Homeless Veterans  
**1990** Americans with Disabilities Act  
**1991** Deer Island prison closes to construct new sewage treatment infrastructure  
**1991** House of Correction moves to South Bay  
**1990s** Aggressive marketing and prescription of opioids  
**1996** Boston Public Health Commission

## 21st Century

### 2014

In 2014, Mayor Walsh ordered the evacuation of Long Island in Boston Harbor due to concerns about the structural stability of the Long Island Bridge, which provided access to social services for hundreds of disadvantaged individuals on the island. Between 220 and 250 individuals staying in shelters on Long Island, as well as approximately 250-300 people who utilized daily services, were transported by the MBTA to temporary shelters mainly in the geographies of Mass and Cass. City staff from the Public Health Commission, Office of Emergency Management, and police department assisted at the

temporary locations during the bridge closure, which impacted around 440 people in total who relied on resources on Long Island.

## **2017**

Housed in a temporary, 3200 square foot tent, The Engagement Center opens to provide support and services to individuals experiencing homelessness and substance use challenges. Operated by the Boston Public Health Commission, the center served as a low-threshold, daytime space offering access to water, coffee, bathrooms, showers, a nurse's clinic, and workstations.

## **2019**

In August 2019, Boston mobilized multiple city departments in the policing and expulsion of individuals experiencing homelessness in the geographies of Mass and Cass. In a coordinated effort by police and public works departments, people were displaced, personal belongings were seized and destroyed, and multiple arrests were made. Citing an incident of violent crime against a Suffolk County corrections officer, the city legitimized "Operation Clean Sweep" as part of "an effort to address ongoing community concerns in the general area of Massachusetts Avenue and Southampton Street in Roxbury"

**2008** Marijuana decriminalized in Massachusetts

**2008** Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act

**2008** Global financial crisis

**2009** Boston launches "Citizens Connect" 311 Reporting

**2011** Governor Patrick declares opioid crisis a public health emergency

**2011** Protesters "Occupy Boston" in tent encampments

**2014** Mayor Walsh orders evacuation of Long Island

**2017** Day shelter, The Engagement Center, opens on Southampton Street

**2018** Martin v. Boise addresses anti-encampment laws

**2019** Operation Clean Sweep

**2019** ACLU of Massachusetts v. City of Boston

**2020** COVID-19 Pandemic hits Boston

**2021** Addiction and homelessness declared public health emergencies